





NAVAL CADET CARLYLE'S GLOVE

BY

IONA OAKLEY GORHAM

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To Kenilworth
series



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J. SELWIN TAIT AND SONS

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NAVAL CADET CARLYLE'S GLOVE.

CHAPTER I.

DINNER at the bachelor mess of the —th Cavalry, quartered for the winter at Blanksville, South Carolina, is over. The colonel, by a special act of divine providence a bachelor as Freddy Winston is wont to say, is leaving the room. The subs settle themselves for a smoke. Scarcely giving the colonel time to get out of earshot, they all turn eagerly to Freddy, who meets their gaze beamingly, and with a badly suppressed air of importance.

"What is it, young one?" drawls Captain Parker. "One can see, with half an eye, that you are literally bubbling over with news. If you don't unburden yourself soon, I refuse to answer for the consequences."

"Yes, speak, youth! If you know of anything that will keep us from dying of *ennui* in this beastly hole, let us have it. Come," says Hunter.

Freddy manages to dispose of the enormous amount of pudding which he had unluckily taken before he observed the colonel was about to depart, and gasps: "Miss Van Velssler has come."

"Is that your news?" murmurs Hunter in an injured tone. "Why, that is old. Vince saw her this morning,

and told it in barracks before drill. Said he saw her standing on the Glenwood bridge. He rode by slowly enough to take her in from head to foot, and is ready to swear she wears a number one boot. Just like his impudence to have stopped and inquired the way home. He generally manages to speak to a pretty woman whether he knows her or not."

Freddy collapses after his little bomb hangs fire; finally he brightens—perhaps they have not heard it *all*.

"Have you heard—?" he hesitates and looks around pleadingly. But that he is regarded with suspicion is evident. They fail to be aroused. They say nothing, and he is confident that victory is his. "Have you heard of the party to be given at Glenwood?" he winds up triumphantly.

"What! the old girl going to give a party! Never; don't believe it, my boy; they are fooling you."

"Yes, she is though," says Freddy, thoroughly revived now and warming to the subject. "Got it from the best authority, the Bradley girls. *What* those young women don't know—" admiringly.

"They know every one else's business, certainly," growls a man at the other end of the table.

"It is funny," says Captain Parker, as he stirs the shells on his plate, finally picks up a walnut and cracks it, "that in New York or a civilized country, one considers a ball a perfect bore; but here, where there are none, you fellows grow as excited over the prospect of a dance as a *débutante* over her first appearance. However, I excuse you on the score that it is the little Van Velssler and not old Miss Carrol's cards that is upsetting your young selves."

"Quite right, learned sir," says Hunter. "Jove! what a beauty she is. I'd like to see her when she is a few years older, when the savor of the schoolroom is entirely gone."

"She is charming as she is," says Parker. "There is a tone about her that is thoroughly captivating; the kind of girl who is amusing without being fast, good without being dull—rare indeed," with a sigh that leads one to believe that he is in the deepest woe that the average woman falls so far below his standard. "One is so tired of the *ingénue*," he continues, "the baby stare makes me desperate; in fact, it has been worked to a finish. I had to take that Danton baby out to dinner at the Willets' last evening. Her mouth was a round O the entire time; her eyes were stretched open wide, and had an expressionless stare in them that would have been *invaluable* to any poker player; she tossed her tumbled blond hair back, with a gesture that was so infantile that it suggested soothing syrup, from a brow that was very pretty to be sure, but I beheld all its beauties perfectly the first time, and the numerous others were a reckless expenditure of energy."

"But to return to the Van Velssler, why don't you go in and win the prize, Parker?" says Freddy enviously.

"Me?" with an indolent lifting of the long lashes which shade his gray eyes, that looks as if it cost him a great physical effort. "Me?" he questions again, depreciatingly. "My dear boy, you flatter me—then think of the insufferable amount of trouble an '*affaire*' would be in this beastly climate. Why don't you try your own luck?"

"That is right; dangle the prize temptingly in front

of my eyes, when you know it is tantalizingly beyond my reach. How can a poor devil of a second lieutenant expect to marry? Why," indignantly, "my pay just keeps me in white gloves, and I am always up to my neck in debt. What on earth I'd do if it were not for my dear old governor, who comes to my rescue every now and then and sets me on my legs, I don't know. Though how the poor old boy manages it, I can't see. Well, I'd go to the bottom, that's all—I will some day I suppose, and the sooner the better."

"Hunter, reach me that wine bottle. The young one has had enough; he always has when he talks like that," says Parker as he moves from his attitude of careless grace, and empties the contents of the bottle into his own glass.

"No," continues Freddy wrathfully, not deigning to notice the movement, "it is only such as Parker, who is that *rara avis* a moneyed army man, who can afford to marry. A shame I call it to expect a gentleman to live on the mere pittance they allow us."

"You forget, Freddy, *mon enfant*, that you always have the privilege of marrying an heiress. There is the Bristol—you have only to speak, and she and her millions are yours. Ye gods! imagine Freddy, our curled darling, sitting opposite 'Miss Bones' at the breakfast table forever. His appetite would be gone, and he would fade before our eyes. I say, old fellow, can't you get her to adopt you, and make her will in your favor?"

A laugh goes up from around the table. Freddy makes some reply, which would no doubt be crushing, but it is lost in the uproar.

"Gentlemen," says a voice from the door. "Beg pardon, I forgot my glasses," and with gentle dignity the colonel crosses the floor, picks up his property and again leaves the room.

There is a silence for a moment after the door closes. They know how little of this thing—messroom gossip—it takes to arouse the wrath of the dear old colonel, who is, as they say, "an all-round good sort, but the very mischief when he is thoroughly angered."

"He is a good old boy," says Freddy, looking at the closed door; "and after all, he is right. Messroom gossip is a thing that ought to be frowned down by gentlemen, and it is a cowardly, contemptible thing to discuss women as we have been doing. Now, look here, Hunter, I want this dropped—all this rot about Miss Bristol. Do y' hear?" and Freddy leaves the room and bangs the door after him.

"Such a mistake to excite one's self in this climate," says a man at the other end of the table.

"Yes, the weather is—" Hunter stops for a metaphor.

"Devilish," says Captain Parker sweetly, as he lights a cigar and steps out into the soft Southern air.

It is the last of December, but the roses are in bloom, and across the dusty parade grounds comes the scent of oleander blossoms. It is like a night in June. Clyde Parker sets his cap slightly back; the balmy wind raises his blond hair from his brow. Little blue rings of smoke from his cigar curl in front of him as he strolls along. He is one of the few handsome men who are *eligible*, chaperons say, with a sigh. But up to date the gallant Captain has carefully eluded "those fetters Cupid forges at Hymen's altar." Mammás and

chaperons frown at his short stays at his home in St. Louis, and whirl pretty girls—and heaven help him! often horribly ugly ones—off to Colorado for the summer—when his regiment is stationed there; and said mammas and chaperons suddenly develop lung trouble and are ordered by the doctors, that one class of men who are thoroughly satisfactory and accommodating, to the sunny South, when he is there.

There is a faint smile on his lips—lips that are full and red. Strange, he thinks, that he who has had the prize beauties of the last ten seasons thrown at his head, and has been pleased to flirt with them, and been amused at their masterful efforts to bring him seriously to their feet, that, after all, he, Clyde Parker, should be almost captivated by this little Southern girl, who has not even left school. Bah, the girl is only a pretty child; and yet—

Taps sound. Clear and shrill the bugle rings out on the warm night air.

He tosses away his cigar, which has long since gone out unnoticed, and turns into his quarters.

CHAPTER II.

"You see, my dear Viva, the Carrols have been undisputedly the representative people of South Carolina, but, as happens sometimes to old families, we have degenerated fearfully lately. We are literally at the end of our line. The *finale* has arrived. I have struggled and staved it off for years, but I can do so no longer, and we must face the worst as best we may. I am compelled to sell Glenwood—a wonder that all the dead and gone Carrols do not turn in their graves at the bare thought—for it is mortgaged up to the very windows; so you see there is nothing left for me to do but to go to Australia and marry a man I refused twenty years ago, but who, by some strange fatality, has written to me just now, when I need him. It has come to this: that I must either accept this offer or make my own living, and a Carrol could not do that. Are you listening to me, Viva?"

"Eh?" with a start. She is pondering on the awful catastrophe suggested by Miss Carrol, and thinking that if all the Carrols *have* turned in their graves, what an expense it would be to have them laid back respectably in their last resting-places, and what a calamity it is that it should have occurred at this inopportune moment, when the family exchequer is in such a deplorable condition, and, after all, what an unfortunate thing it is to have been born a Carrol.

"Yes, auntie, you were saying—er—"

"I was saying," continued Miss Carrol, with fearful emphasis, "that it is very fortunate that you, who will have your own living to make, do not bear the family name. Since your mother made a fool of herself and ran away with a vagabond artist—"

"Not another word about my father, auntie; I will not have it," rising and facing Miss Carrol wrathfully—standing to do better battle for her loved one.

"Don't be so plebeianly excitable, my dear; nothing, positively *nothing*, shows low blood sooner than such outbursts of temper. That lack of repose comes from being allowed to tramp about with your vagabond father and associate with his Bohemian friends."

Viva is grasping the back of her chair; hot, blinding tears burn her eyes. She has to fight the old battle over again, though she knows it is useless to combat with such a foe, and she already bears many a scar from repeated conflicts, but the vision conjured up by the enemy's last words effaces all her wrath, and carries her back to the old days—such happy days they were—when she and her handsome, debonair father wandered about, unfettered by home ties, on those sketching expeditions. There were winters on the Indian River, summers on the Jersey coast, and all life was beautiful. Ah, but there were hard times too, when money was scarce, and want came uncomfortably near. But there were always friends worse off, and it was pleasant to help them. Then there were times when a stupid public saw fit to recognize real genius for a spell and buy a big picture; then they lived royally, and she was queen of that goodly company—those

careless, happy Bohemian friends of her father. The little Princess they called her. She is, at last, aware that Miss Carrol is speaking.

“I will pay for your last term at school and your commencement gown, and give you enough money to board you a month. After that I am not responsible for you. So if you fail to get your diploma, it is your own fault, and I wash my hands of you. I will have done my duty. I leave February first for my new home. I put it off a month so that you could have one more Christmas at Glenwood, and take your chances here. There is Captain Parker, the catch of the *whole* army. He raved over you when you were here for a short time in the summer. Of course he belongs to the fastest set in St. Louis, and would probably tire of you in a week; but he would continue to treat you with the deference and courtesy due the woman who bears his name; he would not quarrel with you because he would deem it bad form—death he considers a *small* punishment for one guilty of making a scene—and besides he is too inordinately selfish; a scene would hurt his sense of refinement. He would sue for a divorce if you dared appear before his friends in a toilet not perfectly correct, and he is an authority on dress. Yes, he is *painfully* fastidious; but then my dear, he is charming.

“There is Richard Baxter, who has some—in fact, a great deal of money, though I fear he is not very generous. The roses he sent in the summer were not the best, and three out of the five books you wanted were evidently taken from his sister's library, as they had her name upon them. I was on thorns for fear they would be lost—you are so careless with books—as, of

course, they had to be returned to their rightful owner; besides he is horribly jealous, and jealous men are dangerous. One had just as well *be* indiscreet as to have one's husband make a disgraceful scene. There will be fifty women who will say, 'No doubt the man had cause; where there is so much smoke, *et cætera*.' Those dark men, when they are not pleasant, are so very difficult. Yes, I would say that he is distinctly disagreeable, yet—. Then, as a last resort, there is that young idiot, Freddy Winston; perhaps he might do better than nothing." [Oh, shades of the immortal—th cavalry, could your pet junior lieutenant hear that!]
"I am giving this party to-morrow night for your sake. I have drawn up the forces; it is for *you* to carry on the war. Leave me now. Lower that curtain; there, that will do. See that Aunt Pinky irons your one good gown," she calls after the retreating figure, and Miss Carrol settles herself complacently for a nap.

Viva goes through the low window and seats herself on the old-fashioned veranda that runs all the way around the house. She edges her chair in the shadow of one of the great iron posts which support the upper porch. She is not shocked at this cold discussion of her marriage, only very much amused; Miss Carrol *did* seem so terribly in earnest. She is not surprised that love is left out of her aunt's reckoning; she has been told since earliest infancy that love makes up no part of life. Her father had said so, and his word was still her law.

Poor Hugh Van Velssler's romance died a hard and early death. He was a happy, careless fellow, living only for his art, when ill luck brought him to

the neighborhood of Glenwood. He was painting in the woods one day, when he first saw pretty, foolish, little May Carrol. She was running at full speed down the lane, with her big dog at her heels. He afterward painted her as he saw her that day, with her fair hair falling, her baby lips parted, her tiny hand outstretched, as Daphne flying from Apollo.

They met one evening at the rectory. He was an artist, and her beauty stirred the depths of his passionate soul; he fell madly in love with her. There were sweet stolen meetings under the honeysuckle arbors, when all Glenwood was still; and meetings down by the river, where he made her a throne of bluebells, when she was supposed to be studying botany with her governess. Well, it was the old story: they ran away and were married. Her father never forgave her, but left his mortgaged estates and debts to his oldest daughter—the second daughter was the wife of a New York millionaire—when he died, shortly after. Pretty, weak little May was not of the stuff of which heroines are made; she soon grew tired of the wandering life and longed for the elegance of her proud old Southern home. She woke up to the fact that life was not a bluebell bower, with a handsome sweetheart in a velvet painting coat at her feet; that there were such prosaic things on this mundane sphere as butchers' bills, and alas! unpaid ones. Finally she tearfully upbraided her husband for what she termed taking advantage of her youth and ignorance to delude her into such a marriage. This stung him, highstrung and sensitive as he was, to the quick. His artist friends, who dropped off from visiting him one by one, used to say, "Mrs.

Van is a woman who can make it, all round, deucedly unpleasant when she tries." These terrible domestic storms made a painful impression on the childish mind of little Viva, and when she was eight years old her mother fretfully resigned her useless life, to her own relief and that of every one else. So Hugh Van Velssler grew very bitter on this subject—love marriages. His disposition was too sweet to spoil utterly, and he taught his little daughter not to be blinded by love, not to throw away her life for a passion, which he assured her would only last, at best, a few weeks. Had *he* not loved madly, romantically; and had his love not settled down from bare tolerance to almost hate?

Miss Carrol said it was the one good thing he had done in his life. Nothing might have been expected of him but that he would fill her head with nonsense and allow her to marry a vagabond like himself.

Her father was wont to say: "Marry a good man, my daughter; one who is congenial, your best friend if possible, and above all one who is in your own circle, and one you can be proud of, and who can take good care of you; for believe me, grinding poverty and happiness cannot go hand in hand, and you will get as much enjoyment out of life as falls to the lot of mortals here below."

He died three years ago, and Miss Carrol reluctantly took Viva to live with her, and spent what money she could upon this niece who was thrust upon her; for oh! the Carrols are not stingy. But with every gift came a little pin prick. She was reminded twenty times a day that the father she loved so fondly was a ne'er-do-well, and had left her destitute.

Viva sits now in the sunlight, revelling in it, till her Titian hair seems all aglow. The future does not hold much terror for her. She has youth, strength, and perfect health, and far better than all the world, youth's golden crown—Hope. That is what makes youth beautiful to behold. It is not alone rounded cheeks, bright eyes and bewildering forms, but it is that refreshing something that is there before experience comes and, with cruel hand, robs the cheek of its bloom, makes the eye furtive and suspicious, makes the impulses slower and less generous. When hope is gone, youth too has flown. Ah, youth, surely you are a priceless dower!

CHAPTER III.

IT is the night of Miss Carrol's ball. The old mansion of Glenwood is lighted from the ground to the turret. No attempt at extensive decoration has been made. The broad windows are thrown open, and through them comes the scent of the sweet old-fashioned garden flowers. Captain Parker and the men from the post have sent quantities of cut flowers, but Viva has put them in simple, loose bunches in painted bowls on the centre tables. The broad colonial hall, with its great fireplace at the end, and its hard, polished floor is used for dancing. In the long drawing-room, with its worn black furniture, stands Miss Carrol, gowned in her best black silk, and falls of point lace at her throat, fastened with a huge diamond star. A thorough aristocrat she looks, from her soft gray hair, piled high on her head, to her dainty, Southern foot, encased in its tiny velvet slipper. The whole countyside is present.

"Egad, it looks like oldtimes—Christmas festivities at Glenwood once more," says an old beau.

Bunches of mistletoe hang from the chandelier to remind one it is Christmas, and not June, as one would judge by the thermometer. The darkey musicians are seated at the end of the hall, led by Uncle Josh, "Marse Carrol's fav'rit fiddler," as he is wont to say proudly. The half plaintive, wholly delightful music—

there is always a *timbre* of sadness in a negro's playing—fills the room. It is altogether a pleasing picture. An air of wholesome enjoyment pervades the entire scene. It strikes Captain Parker forcibly as he stands in the door a moment before entering. He has spoken to Miss Carrol, whose attention is taken up now with Freddy, and then hurries forward to where Viva is standing under the chandelier.

If she had studied the effect, she could not have chosen a more advantageous spot in which to show off her beauty. An older girl would have preferred the more kindly shade of the corners, but the full glare of the lamps brings out the dazzling whiteness of her neck and arms, and sends little gleams of light from her hair. Her gown is white mull with quantities of old lace—lace unearthed from a chest in the attic.

Freddy has reached her before Captain Parker, who has stopped to admire the picture she makes, and has audaciously taken three waltzes on her card. She is looking up into his eyes, the position showing the perfect contour of her face and the superb lashes.

"Please don't give him all he has the effrontery to ask for, Miss Van Velssler, or the rest of us will be forced to put him out of the way to secure a waltz with you," says Clyde, bowing before her.

"How do you do, Captain Parker? I saved the first waltz for you, but I began to think you were not coming."

He smiles and looks admiringly down into her laughing eyes.

"Jove! is it coquetry, or did she really know I had not come?" he wonders, as he hastily scribbles his name.

Well, whatever it is, it is very pleasant, and he gives himself up to it.

"The music has begun, and every note we are not dancing is a clear loss," he says, as he puts his arm lightly about her.

"They drift down the hall together,
He smiles in her lifted eyes ;
Like the waves of that mighty river,
The strains of the ' Danube ' rise.
They float on in rhythmic measure,
Like leaves on a summer's stream ;
Through the cloud of her Titian tresses,
Like a star shines out her face,
And the form his strong arm presses
Is sylph-like in its grace."

Is that sulky individual standing there gazing after them Freddy, the life of his regiment? Surely not.

"That was splendid, the time was perfect," Viva says as they stop in front of a window.

"Yes," he answers, "but disgracefully short. Ah, a fan, I see," appropriating it. "I hope the young woman to whom it belongs won't need it," he says, with a laugh.

There is only one chair visible; she seats herself and looks up at him as he stands beside her, waving the fan he has purloined to and fro.

"Oh, it is all so delightful; and to think that tomorrow I must go back," she says with a little sigh.

"Surely you are not going back so soon! Why," ruefully, "you have only just come."

"Yes, I know, but Richmond, unfortunately, is not very near here, and I must leave in time to arrive for

the examinations, else I cannot receive my diploma, and that means very much to me, you know," frankly.

Delightful! This grows more interesting! Beauty in distress. He bends lower over her, and thinks what a difference there is between them. The money he idly, carelessly throws away would keep this fragile girl in luxury. The idea of her—why, she is a mere baby—grinding her butterfly life away as a teacher. Ugh! the thought is repulsive to him.

He is seized with a temptation, for the first time in his life, to make love seriously to a woman. He gives himself up gladly to the delightful madness. If a grain of his old philosophy thrusts itself forward, he scorns to notice the dawning of reason. She is the first woman who has looked straight into his eyes in a moment like this. The others have lowered their lids from real or affected embarrassment—he has never taken the pains to find out which—when they met his too ardent gaze. After all, he reasons with himself, why not? He must marry some day, the gossips have always assured him, and she is beautiful and high-bred. He controls himself with a mighty effort. To make love to the woman he expects to marry in a crowded ball room, where others may read her face, offends his taste; to detain her longer from her guests is out of the question.

"What time do you leave?" he finally asks.

"To-morrow afternoon at four."

"Then will you permit me to call in the morning? I'll more probably find you disengaged then," with a suggestive glance at Freddy, who is glaring at them from a neighboring doorway. "Will you," he waits till

she ties the ribbon on her bouquet, then forces her to look at him, and continues, "will you receive me at such an unearthly hour as ten, and—?"

"There he is now," says Miss Bradley, bringing her partner to a stop before them. "Captain Parker, what do you mean by not coming to claim your dance? The set is forming, and Mr. Hunter is anxious to drop me and find his next partner. Come on."

He remembers that yesterday at guard mount he was duffer enough to ask Emma Bradley to dance; she was the only woman in sight. Strange that he never noticed before how loud and unladylike her voice was. Heavens! what bad form she is altogether. Poor Emma goes through the quadrille all unconsciously, and enjoys herself thoroughly. She is not finestrung enough to discover that she is not in touch with her unusually silent partner.

Viva still sits where Clyde left her. Finally, compelled by a force she does not take the trouble to resist, she raises her eyes; they fall upon the gloomy visage of Richard Baxter. He looks at her with keen disapproval and does not deign to notice her smile.

"Sulky," thinks Viva. She raises the fan Captain Parker gave her as he went off with his partner, and calls the gloomy knight to her. "Why are you not dancing?" she asks sweetly.

"I am getting too old for that nonsense," grumpily.

"Oh, you miss a great deal by not dancing. I love it," with a friendly little glance, but he notices she does not disagree with him that he is too old, and so refuses to be appeased.

"I do not approve of it," with growing wrath, his

dusky brows nearly meeting in a frown. "I shall *forbid* my wife to dance," warming to the subject.

"Clearly, he is best let alone," thinks Viva, and giving Freddy the nod of encouragement he has been waiting for, he comes jubilantly up to her. As she takes his arm, she looks over her shoulder and says with wicked sweetness, "I hope you will change your mind, Mr. Baxter, and ask me to dance."

"He looked as if he was going to eat you," Mr. Baxter hears Freddy say, as he tucks her hand in his arm with an exasperatingly protective air, and leads her down the room. "I was waiting to rush valiantly to your rescue."

Viva laughs from sheer light-heartedness.

Mr. Baxter looks after her a moment, grinds his teeth together, thrusts open the lace curtains, then goes across the balcony and down the steps, and, to Freddy's intense delight, Banquo's ghost, as he terms him, is seen no more that evening.

"Your niece is certainly a beautiful girl," says a mother, who having comfortably disposed of her last lamb can be generous.

"Yes, Viva is very pretty, though she has not been presented to society yet, you know. We are so informal here, you see, that I let her come down for to-night," says Miss Carrol, the ruling passion strong in death. For though this last daughter of the Carrols will never, in all human probability, be "presented to society," but in a few months will be dragging out her life in a dingy schoolroom, pounding verbs into the heads of a lot of stupid children, Miss Carrol does not feel called upon to say so.

After she has gone they can say what they like, but now she will have none of their sympathy, genuine or sham, and with a haughty little gesture of impatience with herself, she turns to her guests.

The ball, this last triumph of the Carrols, is a success certainly. It is like the last night of the reign of an unfortunate sovereign. The proud, gracious mistress of Glenwood exerts herself to crowd as much enjoyment as possible into the few remaining hours. She is constantly surrounded by an admiring little court. Her eyes flash and sparkle with almost the fire of youth. Her brilliant wit keeps her subjects on the *qui vive* for response. She determines that the countryside shall remember her last ball. The lights shine down upon her patrician face, flushed and animated; on the slender jewelled hand that gracefully waves a big feather fan. She finds time once or twice to wonder what that tiresome niece of hers is doing—exactly the reverse of the proper thing, no doubt. But she cannot give up her court to look after Viva. This night is *hers*, and she means to enjoy it. She has stated the case plainly to Viva, and if she chooses to let her opportunities slip through her fingers,—well, it is her own fault, Miss Carrol decides with a shrug.

At last it is over. They have all gone, the quaint dear old chaperons, in their rich laces, and diamonds in settings which were fashionable half a century ago; the old beaux with their oldtime gallantries, and courtly *bon mots*; the pretty girls in their dainty evening gowns, and the young officers.

Miss Carrol stands for a moment, after she has bidden the last guest good-by, with a smile on her lips.

She suddenly comes back to the unpleasant present, and glances toward a sofa, where Viva sits, her hands clasped behind her head, her bare arms looking whiter than ever against the black velvet cushions. There is a troubled look on the usually *piquante* face. She is so fond of gayety and of making other people happy, and to-night she fears she has unwittingly inflicted a mortal blow upon a fellow being.

"Well?" Miss Carrol breaks in upon her reflections, after gazing at her expectantly for a moment.

"Well?" repeats Viva, raising her violet eyes and turning them full upon her inquisitor.

"Of course, I do not want to force your confidence," says Miss Carrol haughtily, "but I think it would be hardly worth your while to keep me in the dark. Freddy proposed to you, I believe."

"Mr. Winston asked me to marry him, auntie."

"And you?"

"I refused him."

Miss Carrol is aghast for a second, until she remembers how Captain Parker looked at Viva at parting, and his whispered, "I'll see you in the morning." Of course he would hardly feel called upon to ride over simply to say good-by to a school-girl, unless he is very much impressed, and intends to lay his hand and check-book at her feet. Yet a whispered word, a caressing glance from such a notorious flirt as Clyde Parker may, after all, only mean that he cannot resist making himself a degree more than conventionally agreeable to a beautiful woman. She half regrets Viva's lack of diplomacy in not dangling Freddy in suspense. Still, it is no affair of hers. *Che sara sara.*

"I suppose, of course, you know what you are about, my dear, but that fascinating sinner Parker is very uncertain."

"Good-night, auntie. Your ball was very pretty," is all she answers, as she picks up her bedroom candle and goes wearily upstairs.

For the first time she is brought face to face with the horror of the situation. How dreadful it is to be thrown at the head of every man she meets. What if some of them *suspect* it? Her womanhood rebels bitterly at the insult of it. Her delicate body trembles from head to foot. She pulls the window down with a little shiver; the night has grown chilly, and replacing her white ball gown with a *peignoir* she seats herself by the open fireplace and thinks.

Try as she will, she cannot banish the memory of Freddy Winston's face when he left her to-night in the conservatory. She had spoken to him so gently, but how dreadful it was to see his bright, boyish face grow so set and hard, and how he crushed her hand at parting. See, he has broken the little friendship ring her school-fellow gave her!

The embers are fast dying out and turning to ashes. Something pulls at the tassel on her little wigwam slipper of soft blue kid.

"Poor little kitten," she says, picking up the tiny specimen. "Are you waiting for your bed? Disgracefully late for us to be up—quite dissipated we are growing on the strength of being grads. Kitty, what would you do, and oh, little cat, *what* will become of us?" with a sob as she squeezes it to her breast.

The kitten cries out in pain, and as she apologetically

strokes it and puts it down, it runs and curls itself into a fluffy ball of white in the little blue slipper just discarded.

After a useless attempt to stir the dying embers into a final blaze, Viva slips between the lavender-scented sheets.

Below, the lights are out. All is still. The Carrols have entertained for the last time at Glenwood; their reign is over; they have passed into history.

CHAPTER IV.

IT is the morning after the ball. Last night "a norther" blew up, and to-day the air is crisp and delightful, seeming twice as invigorating after the warm weather of yesterday. The birds nestle down in the branches and twitteringly wonder what has come to them.

Viva goes down the path leading to the river. A very pretty Viva she is, gowned in a close-fitting golden brown serge; a large hat of brown velvet, with a dash of yellow on it somewhere, droops over her eyes. She stops to button her cloth jacket, and gathers a bunch of yellow chrysanthemums and fastens them on her breast, as she trips gayly down the path.

At eighteen, one's troubles vanish with the shadows in the corners in one's bedroom at the dawn, chased away by the glad light of day.

"Ah, Miss Viva, you are out early after your dissipation of last night," says Judge Vane, the family lawyer, stopping her in the path.

"Early, is it? I don't know. A long course of boarding-school, where we are up with the blithesome lark, and button our boots by the dim candle-light, makes this seem delightfully, naughtily late," she says brightly.

"You don't look as if you had danced till the wee small hours," looking kindly down into her face. "Ah,

well, youth can follow the hounds all day over a mountainous country, and dance all night, and be none the worse for wear. If this weather lasts, we'll have some jolly hunting next week. I wish you could stay with us, little one."

"Yes, I would like to ride across country with you once more, but I never will again," sadly.

"Tut, tut, you'll cover yourself with glory at college, marry a millionaire, who will buy Glenwood, and you'll continue to worry us half to death," says the old Judge crossly, to hide the feeling in his voice.

"Thank you any way for your kind wishes," giving him her hand. He takes it and presses it between both his own.

"My dear, I hope you will not consider it impertinence—surely, I am a friend of sufficient standing to say that—er—well, the truth is, don't you think you are a little unkind to my friend Baxter?"

"Ahem, he has evidently sent the poor old Judge to sound the ground for him," thinks Viva. If there is anything a woman has a contempt for, it is a man who lacks the manhood to stand up bravely before her and tell her he loves her and ask her to become his wife, running the risk of a possible no. If he shows himself so lacking in courage, how can she venture to trust herself to his care? She says aloud, however, "Has he been complaining of me to you? You are too good a lawyer to condemn with only one side of the case stated," as she dances along by his side.

"Oh, no, he has not said anything."

"What?" wheeling round and facing him, her eyes full of mischief.

"Well—er—that is not *much*," says the poor old man, stopping short, and uneasily shifting to the other side of the path.

Miss Van Velssler eyes him with sternness. He will not meet her gaze.

"And you *listened* to him, let him say bad things of me. No doubt he said I was a flirt or something else dreadful. Oh, Judge, I would not have thought it of you!"

Her victim looks so uncomfortable that she laughs merrily.

"Did you really think I could be angry with you a second, you darling? Let me give you a flower. There," pinning one of her yellowest chrysanthemums on his coat. "Now you are complete; 'one touch more would mar your perfect beauty.'"

"Jove, if I were twenty years younger I would not want some one to propose to the little witch for me," thinks Judge Vane. However he feels it his duty to go on. "But, my dear, Baxter is such a good fellow; he means well. I assure you a kind heart beats under that rough exterior. And then, Viva dear, he is so very wealthy," he winds up shamefacedly.

"Horrible!" laughs she. "Who would have thought that under such a benign 'exterior' you were such a mercenary old wretch? Oh, how one can be deceived!"

"You see, dear, you are such a child, and if the worst comes—"

"Well, if the worst comes, and I am starving, you'll share a crust with me, eh? Just for old times' sake!"

"You are welcome to everything I have, you know that, only it is so pitifully little to offer," sadly,

"but if ever you need me, if ever I can do anything for you, you will let me know at once? Promise me, Viva."

"Oh, yes, I'll wire you as a last extremity before I pawn my jewels, as they say." This lightly, to conceal the struggle she is making to keep back the tears. "Now go in and see auntie. I have kept you long enough."

"What shall I say to Baxter, if I should *happen* to see him?" begins the Judge, vainly imagining that he is wonderfully diplomatic.

"Tell him I am sorry he was such a bear last night," Viva replies, with a laugh, as she disappears down the path.

"Heaven keep her always as gay and happy," he says, as he takes off his glasses and wipes the moisture from them.

Clyde Parker is walking hurriedly toward Glenwood. Is he too early? Will she be ready to receive him? What will she say? He who has always been so insolently sure of success is uncertain now; for the first time in his life, my lord is pleased to make a very modest estimate of himself. She is such a beauty, and all the fellows are wild over her, perhaps—bah, "faint heart, *et cætera*." He lifts his haughty head, and turns into the road leading to Glenwood.

Few women could resist him, with that fire in his beautiful eyes, that firm determination written on his perfect lips, that grand, masterful air about him. All women, even the most high-spirited, like masterful men—not one, of course, who is pettily tyrannical, but one who, while gracefully courteous, simply *wills* and she obeys.

Captain Parker stops suddenly at the gate; there stands Freddy, furiously trying to open it. But, alas, Freddy's hand is very unsteady. He has clearly been trying to drown his sorrow. Captain Parker gazes in astonishment at the wild eyes, the fair, dishevelled hair, the flushed face. He is too amazed to speak.

Freddy glares at him. How he hates him, all the more because he has worshipped him with the adoration a boy sometimes has for an older man. He has considered Clyde an authority on everything from horses and dress up; he has made a hero of him; and above all he has been so proud of the rather unusual friendship, he himself being only a second lieutenant. But now all is changed. The idol is his rival, and he would give worlds to see him humbled to the very dust before the woman both have unluckily chosen to call upon at the same time.

"Good heavens, Winston, what does this mean?" says Clyde, as soon as he recovers his presence of mind.

"What do you suppose it means?" he answers hotly. "Though it is none of your business, I'll tell you. You are going to do Miss Van Velssler the honor of offering her your hand, and are furious that I am ahead of you. Not that I stand any show," growing more wrathful as he thinks of the possible, nay probable, success of the other. "But that don't hinder me from trying. I am not such a fool as that Baxter, who left the ball room last night because she gave me a smile. The way to win a woman is by constantly asking her, and if she says no to me a hundred times I'll keep on asking her," tearing at the gate.

"Look here, Winston, don't be a fool. You are in

no condition to present yourself to Miss Van Velssler. Go back to barracks at once," laying his hand on the shoulder of the young madman and trying to force him away.

"Let me alone," fiercely. "That is right. I like to see you afraid for me to try first. It gives me hope. I tell you fifty like you could not keep me from her now."

"Winston," his face pale with suppressed rage that would have completely cowered a sober man, "don't you dare to enter that gate."

"Oh, the fascinating captain fears his lieutenant, eh? You urge me on—buoy me up with wild hope. We are both in the uniform; why don't you put me under arrest? You are my superior officer. Ha, ha, it would take your whole troop, *mon capitain*," as he flings open the gate and rushes up the walk.

"You are a disgrace to the uniform," mutters Captain Parker, as he strides after the young idiot to capture him. It will be an easy matter to secure him before he comes in view of the house, Captain Parker thinks.

Viva is sitting in the tennis court. As Freddy catches sight of her, he darts across the lawn, Clyde close behind.

"Oh," she thinks grimly, "unfortunate that both my chances," with a little shudder at the word, "should materialize at the same time."

Before she can rise, Freddy is before her. She becomes aware that something is radically wrong. Freddy has lost his cap in the struggle at the gate; the rapid walk has flushed his face to a greater extent.

Captain Parker reaches out and lays his hand heavily on Freddy's shoulder. He is very pale, his breath comes quick and hard. He does not even glance at Viva.

"Miss Van Velssler, we have both come to propose to you," gasps Freddy, struggling to get away from his captor, "and I am determined to speak first."

Viva rises to her feet; her flowers fall from her lap; she gazes mutely at Freddy. Her first thought is terrible, bitter indignation against them both. Then she glances at Captain Parker and sees the awful battle he is doing with himself; she understands the conflict going on within him; sees the anger, contempt, passion, he restrains by a mighty effort. She realizes the situation perfectly, at last, and instinctively draws nearer to him.

"Believe me, Miss Van Velssler, I would have spared you this insult if I could," Clyde says, his voice trembling with suppressed emotion. "If there is anything of the *gentleman* left in you, you will apologize and leave at once," he says to Freddy, as he gives him a shake and forces him to look at him.

That fierce, penetrating gaze and Viva's shrinking seem to sober Freddy; he pulls himself together with a gasp and looks piteously at Clyde.

"I didn't mean to be such a brute," says Freddy, his boyish voice husky with wine. "I will not ask you to forgive me, Miss Van Velssler. You could not pardon my conduct—only please be as generous as you can." He stoops and picks up one of her flowers and thrusts it in his mess-jacket.

"Words cannot say how sorry I am," says Clyde,

taking her hand and looking down into her eyes. He does not trust himself to say anything more, not that he fears another outburst from Freddy—he, poor fellow, is too crushed to hurt a fly—but it is, of course, impossible to speak to her now. It would be the worst possible taste. Later in the day he will return and bear Freddy's apologies, and ask her to be his wife.

"I know," she says. "I do not blame you—and tell him I know he is sorry, and—" her voice trembles and the little hand that tries to open her coat-collar is unsteady.

Captain Parker hears some one approaching from the opposite path, and half drags, half carries Freddy, who seems unable to help himself, across the lawn.

Outside the gate, they stop and look at each other.

"Your conduct, sir, is exceedingly becoming to an officer and a gentleman. You are a *credit*, certainly, to your regiment and the service," says Captain Parker, and each word stings like a lash.

"Don't," with a shudder. "Oh, Parker, why didn't you stop me? Why didn't you shoot me, if nothing else would do? I'd rather a thousand times have died than to have had it happen. It was awful! I'll never forget her face. It was that cursed drink. I was mad last evening when she refused me, and left the room intending to go home, when I concluded to stop a moment on the balcony, to get another look at her. In a few moments she came by with you, and from the way she looked into your eyes I knew it was all over with me. I had gotten leave for three days before I knew of the party, so I did not have to go back to barracks, but went to the village inn, and—well, the

stuff got to my head somehow, and you know the rest."

The village stage is passing, and fortunately empty. Captain Parker hails it.

"To the barracks, and double fare if you do not stop on the way," he says to the driver.

They get in. Freddy covers his face with his hands, and utters not a word during the drive. Captain Parker leans back, closes his eyes, and gnaws his golden mustache furiously. It would all be so laughable were it not so tragic. It is revolting to his fastidious taste. He hates ridicule, nothing hurts him so much. Life would be positively unbearable if it should get out among the fellows. He simply could not stand it. It would be impossible to live through the chaff. Bah! no woman is worth being made ridiculous for. Of course he owes it to his regiment to present himself to the young woman in question and apologize for an almost unpardonable rudeness offered by one of his officers, but—

CHAPTER V.

VIVA sinks down in the garden chair as they leave her, and clasps her hands so tightly on her knee that the tips of her fingers become numb. She has never been so hurt, so mortified in her life before. Ah, Miss Viva, wounded vanity is a terrible thing. Only just now she felt so sorry for a man, who, as it turns out, consoles himself for her loss by getting into a drunken broil. James, the under stable boy, would not have been guilty of such a thing. And that he, that other, should have witnessed her humiliation,—oh, therein is the sting! It is so sweet to every good woman to feel that she is the inspiration of the man who loves her, that he is better for having known and loved her.

“Papa and auntie are right about it, after all,” she thinks as she goes into the house.

Another witness there had been to the scene, of whom she does not know.

Richard Baxter had determined not to go to Glenwood to-day. In fact, he had not risen in the best of humors. His breakfast had been late, an unpardonable sin in his eyes; that duffer of a butler had misplaced his morning paper; his mail was unsatisfactory; he moved about his place restlessly; found fault with the gardener, dismissed a groom for a trifling offence, and—oh, dire thought!—felt himself yielding to an overpowering impulse to go to Glenwood. He who has always

prided himself upon his strength, his hold upon his passions! No one has ever accused Richard Baxter of a weakness, and here his iron will was melting before a slip of a girl who did not seem *overhonored* at his condescensions heretofore. Well, perhaps she did not know he was in earnest. He decided that he would go, after all, and lay his hard-earned and grudgingly spent thousands at her feet. He felt better after being over with the struggle. No doubt her manner was coquetry, to draw him on. Certainly the niece of Miss Carrol would know better than to refuse him. He took a short cut through his woods. Here he would build a dancing pavilion, not that she should dance—no, he'd veto that—but she must entertain as becomes the wife of Richard Baxter, and if the jackanapes wanted to dance, let 'em. He would fix up the old place, it needed it badly any way, and people would point to it with pride and say: "That is the home of Richard Baxter; his wife is the most beautiful woman in the county."

He came up the path where Viva had just been. Miss Carrol saw him from her window.

"Ah, I thought so," she said complacently. "Viva is on the lawn. He will stop and speak to her first. I, of course, need not know he is here, since I have not been informed of it. It is just as well, since Parker is *non est*—I had my doubts of him," and she drew her chair close to the fire and opened her novel.

From the rose arbor he had witnessed the scene just enacted. That the woman *he* had chosen to honor with the offer of his hand should be placed in such a position was maddening. He saw the involun-

tary movement she made towards Captain Parker. To Baxter it seemed as if she wanted to show him her trust and confidence. He refused to look upon it as the natural action of a girl, who would seek any refuge from so unpleasant a position. That upward glance of hers filled him with rage. He was fairly consumed with jealousy. The offence was all the greater because it was an army man who received it.

"I could not look a man in the face, knowing he was taxed to pay for the gewgaws on my coat, and to support me in idleness," he once told Viva.

The cool self-possession, the faultless attire, from his well-fitting boots to his perfectly brushed hair, of the one enraged him as much as the pitiable, dishevelled condition of the other filled him with loathing and contempt. He was too choked to speak, if he had wanted to do so. He stood while Captain Parker made the apology as best he could, saw him hold her hand for what seemed an interminable age, then shutting tight his long dark hands, he strode down the path he had come.

Miss Carrol's interest in her novel begins to flag; she shuts the book and stifles a yawn. Surely it is time she is sent for to bestow her blessing graciously on the happy pair. She sees Viva's future roll out before her. Of course everything will not be exactly *couleur de rose* to Richard Baxter's wife, but then she will be a power in the land. Now if Viva were a different style, that dictatorial, watchfully jealous disposition of his would be unsafe, but there is no danger of Viva making a fool of herself. And out of sheer vanity, he will see that she makes a nice appearance

before the world, no matter what economies go on behind the scenes; and with one's bills paid, an elegant home, handsome horses and carriages, to say nothing of being the best dressed woman in the surrounding country, why, one can afford to laugh at the ravings of a jealous husband. Yes, it is all settled, and Miss Carrol rejoices, for Viva is her niece, and, after all, a Carrol. Yes, thank heaven, it is comfortably settled.

She rises, goes to the window and looks out. The lawn is deserted. What can it mean? Where are they? She rings the bell sharply.

"Aunt Pinky," to the old negro who answers, "where is Miss Viva?"

"I seed her go to her room a right smart while back."

"Tell her I want her at once."

Miss Carrol can hardly contain herself. *Can* that girl have refused Richard Baxter? If so, Miss Carrol washes her hands of her entirely.

"Ah, my dear, I sent for you," as Viva enters. "Have I the pleasure of speaking to Mrs. Baxter that is to be?"

"I don't understand you, auntie."

Heaven give her patience. Miss Carrol is sorely tried.

"Come, Viva, what did Mr. Baxter say to you on the tennis court?" she asks with pardonable sharpness.

At the mention of the tennis court a dark flush mounts to Viva's brow.

"I have not seen Mr. Baxter." Hesitatingly she adds, "Captain Parker and Mr. Winston were here." Slowly at first, then hurriedly, as though to get through

with it before her courage fails, she says: "Mr. Winston had been drinking. Captain Parker met him at the gate, as I understand it, and tried to prevent him from coming in, but could not. Finally, as Mr. Winston reached me, Captain Parker caught up with him, and at last succeeded in taking him off." Then Viva turns away and arranges a flower-pot in the window.

"Preposterous," gasps Miss Carrol, as she shrewdly guesses Viva has put it as lightly as possible. She gets up from her chair, and paces up and down the room in indignation. "One can be on one's guard against maliciousness or against anything in the world except a fool," she continues with growing wrath. "Who would have thought that young idiot would have returned at such a moment? I saw Mr. Baxter come up the river path, and not knowing we were being treated to a scene worthy of a third-rate play, did not interfere. Of course there is but one conclusion at which to arrive: he saw the whole thing, and left in one of his fits of temper. The question is, how to bring him back. Of course, there is an end of Parker. It was a death-blow to romance, and his sense of refinement is hurt; besides he would never stand the 'running,' as they call it, from his brother officers. Such stories are bound to get out. And nowhere do they wear a joke to such a ragged edge as in the army. It would be told to him after he became a general. It would be said he dragged the intoxicated lover of his wife from his knees at her feet, and carrying him off by his back hair, left him in a drunken stupor in his quarters, then returned and took a mean advantage of his disabled rival and proposed himself. So, as I say, there is an end of

him," with a curious glance at the silent figure at the window.

"Why doesn't she speak?" thinks Miss Carrol, fretfully. "One is never sure what she is thinking of; she listens impassively and somehow gives one the impression she is laughing in her sleeve, and cleverly concealing it."

She waits for an answer, but none comes.

"I think I'll write to him. Yes," brightening and going to her desk, and with her gold pen held between her lips, as she arranges her paper, "that is the only way out of it."

After a few moments' silence, broken only by the scratch of the pen as it flies over the paper, she reads:

"DEAR MR. BAXTER:—I had hoped to see you to-day, to ask a favor of you. I want you to see my niece, Miss Van Velssler, off this afternoon. I find that I am too fatigued after last evening to take so long a drive. There is a nuisance of some kind about a ticket to be signed, *et cætera*, for which I fear she will need the assistance of some one more accustomed to traveling than herself.

"Hoping that you will not mind very much taking a three-mile drive with a boarding-school miss, and thanking you for the cuttings of the Japanese chrysanthemums, I am, with best wishes,

Yours,
"EVELINE CARROL."

"There, I fancy that will have the desired effect. Aunt Pinky," she says to her maid, who has answered the bell, "tell James to ride over to Mr. Baxter's place with this note and wait for an answer. Tell him to hurry about it, too. And send Josh to me."

As the door closes behind the old servant Miss Car-

rol sagely adds: "Now, he will come an hour before train time, and you will please keep your room till you are sent for. It would not do to have another *contre-temps*. Yes, Josh, I sent for you," as that worthy bows in the doorway. "Do you know Lieutenant Winston, who called here a few days ago, and who was here last evening?"

"Yessum. Tall gemman wid light har."

"Exactly. Well, he will probably call this afternoon. Now remember, you are to say Miss Carrol is out, and Miss Viva has a headache and is not receiving. Do you understand?"

"Yessum," retiring with a bow worthy of Chesterfield.

"There, that is settled," says Miss Carrol complacently.

"If you are through with me now, auntie, I'll finish my packing," says Viva, dropping her hands heavily against her sides and going toward the door.

"Yes, certainly, my dear. I wonder what is the matter now?" she thinks as she gazes after the retreating form of her niece. "*Could* she have fancied that young idiot, Freddy? No, surely not. No woman would look at him twice with Clyde Parker present. If it is anybody, it must be that fascinating reprobate of a captain. Still, that being true, why on earth didn't she secure him when she had him? Certainly girls are a hard lot to manage; thank heaven, she will be out of my hands soon. Perhaps she is only sulky at the idea of marrying Richard Baxter—girls are such romantic fools, they prefer a man who sits and spoons in the moonlight and talks a lot of rot about

'love forever.' " Still, at the thought of marrying Richard Baxter, Miss Carrol shivers, and, drawing her chair up close to the fire, opens her book and soon loses her own woes in those of the poor much-put-upon heroine.

Shortly after luncheon James returns Miss Carrol her note, saying Mr. Baxter left on the noon train for Charleston.

"Well, she is certainly at the end of her line now," that lady remarks, tossing the note in the fire. She rises and goes up to her niece's room. "I have come to tell you, Viva, that Richard Baxter left for Charleston this morning; it is absurd, like a school-boy, to run away in a temper!" But be as indignant as she may, it will not bring him back, as she very wisely concludes after a few moments.

"Now, the only thing for you to do is to secure your diploma. Don't let that slip through your fingers, as you have everything else; and then, like people who are too stupid or too indolent to take advantage of the opportunities which present themselves, lay the blame on Fate. If there is any one on earth I despise it is a person who is continually apologizing for his mistakes in life by prating of Destiny. I have brought you these jewels; they were your mother's and are your due." [Oh, the Carrols are just, certainly, and if they demand their pound of flesh, they are careful to see that every one else gets his.] "You will, of course, not dispose of them, except as a last extremity. I would advise you to carry them in that little bag suspended from your belt, and upon arriving in Richmond to place them in the bank upon which I make your

draft. I have nothing to suggest, unless it is that you write to your aunt, Mrs. Livingston, though she has cut all her family dead for years. You will have to leave soon, so I will bid you good-by now, as I am very fatigued after all this excitement, and am going to rest."

"Oh, auntie, I am so sorry to leave you, and if I have been a nuisance, a worry, and a fearful expense to you, I am indeed grateful," throwing her arms around the grim old lady, her fresh young voice breaking with sobs.

"There, child, don't make a scene. I am too unstrung to bear it. I am sorry I cannot do more for you, but I have at least done my duty, no one can deny that," kissing her brow, and unclasping the soft, clinging arms.

Viva let her arms fall. She forgot that feeling is plebeian, though she has been told often enough to remember it. Well, after a while, when youth is gone, she will cease to feel, but while her young blood leaps like fire through her veins, before the keen-edged sword of experience cuts into her heart, she must be plebeian. She throws herself on the bed, after Miss Carrol departs, and presses her hands tightly over her eyes.

Josh knocks at her door and presents her with a card.

"Captain Arthur Clyde Parker, —th Cavalry," she reads, and under the name is written: "Sorry not to have had the pleasure. A pleasant trip."

"Where is the gentleman?" she asks.

"I done tole him what ole Miss sayed—she ware gone out, and dat yer ware sick."

She rushes to the window. Captain Parker is at the far end of the carriage-drive. While she looks, he vaults lightly into his saddle and rides rapidly down the road.

"That is all," she says to Josh, who is uncomfortably aware that something is wrong.

"Ole Miss tole me ter tell de tall gemman wid light har—"

"Yes, yes, it is all right, Uncle Josh. Don't forget to carry down my trunk," she added, falling back upon the bed, where she remains motionless until Aunt Pinky comes to rouse her to take the train.

"It's time fur yer ter be gittin' ready, honey," she says as she bends over Viva, who springs to her feet and, going to the glass, brushes out her tumbled hair.

Aunt Pinky lovingly follows her about the room with her open satchel, putting in the brushes and things as she uses them. Viva puts on her hat, and stands holding her gloves in her hand. Aunt Pinky, with tears in her honest old eyes, watches her silently as she glances about the pretty, girlish apartment, with its drawn linen work curtains, looped back with ribbons; its little sketches, the work of her own brush, of different parts of the grounds. There is such a sadness and something so appealing in the last look one casts about the rooms in which one has lived for a long time, as one gathers up one's possessions. True, one is leaving, saying good-by forever, but it would be decidedly uncomfortable to be on the sleeper without one's combs and brushes. There is no time now for sentiment. The train will not wait. There is all the afterward in which to shed tears.

"I believe I have everything," she says as she leaves the room, and steps noiselessly by Miss Carrol's door to keep from waking her. Once she pauses, as though she would go in, then presses her hands over her eyes, and with a laugh that is more than half a sob says, "'So plebeian' of me," and passes out of the front door.

Josh is waiting with the carriage. She stops to take one last look before she goes. The old place is almost in shadow, as the short winter evening is drawing to a close. The blue smoke that curls from the chimneys looks like little wreaths of violets against the sunset sky. There is a crisp breeze that blows across the well-kept lawn, bringing with it the scent of the sweet Southern flowers. The last rays of the sun fall on the shell carriage-drive, shaded by massive oaks. 'Way off, in front of the servants' quarters, she can see the little darkeys at play. From the kennels comes the plaintive bay of the hounds. Beside her stands her pet dog, Bayard. He was her grandfather's favorite hound, but two years ago he had his foot hurt while out hunting, and it had to be amputated. Viva tended him day and night, and now he manages to walk very well on three feet. They have allowed him to stay about the house, since, as Judge Vane says, he is on the pension list. It is very pitiful to see him when he hears the hunter's horn. He accompanies the pack to the gate, then slowly and sorrowfully limps to the house and lays him down by the fire. He stands looking up at Viva inquiringly.

"Dear old Bayard, did you come to bid me good-by? You *knew* I was going away, you darling," kneeling down and putting her arms about him.

He has been taught to shake hands, and as she says good-by, he offers her his right paw, the maimed one.

"You old beauty," she murmurs, holding him to her. "Aunt Pinky, you'll take him yourself to Judge Vane. He promised to take care of him. The new people won't want a crippled hound. You'll do it, Aunt Pinky?"

"I'll tote him mysef, sho, honey," chokingly.

"Good-by, Aunt Pinky, you won't forget me, *quite?*" throwing her arms about the faithful old woman.

"'Deed I won't, chile. An' yer'll come back some day, Miss Viva, an' fetch Pinky ter lib wid yer, won't yer?"

"You may be sure I will, if I can. *Good-by.*"

"God bless yer, honey," she falters, as she strains her to her bosom.

Viva gets into the tumble-down old carriage; Josh shuts the door with a bang; Aunt Pinky throws her apron over her head and sinks sobbing on the steps. Bayard gazes after the carriage with his big moist eyes, hobbles after it to the gate, and as it is closed by Josh, he gives a mournful howl, then comes back and lies down at Aunt Pinky's feet.

There is only Uncle Josh to say good-by to now. Judge Vane wrote to her after luncheon that a sudden attack of rheumatism would prevent him accompanying her to the train. They go rapidly down the road, and through the dilapidated little village. Uncle Josh carries her satchel into the sleeper. There is no one in the car, except an old woman at the opposite end. The bell gives a warning ring. She grasps Uncle Josh's hand, the old fellow takes hers tenderly between

his sable, hardened palms, and then, with slow step and bowed head, leaves the car, for once forgetting his polite bow. He brushes away a tear as he climbs up to his box, and whistles to keep back the sobs. Unconsciously he has selected "Good-by to My Dear Old Southern Home."

Viva gazes out of the window as they pull out of the little station, and struggles to lift the sash, to call out a last good-by, but it refuses to rise. She sits motionless for a moment, the full red lips quiver, then with a passionate gesture she tosses off her hat, and throwing herself upon the opposite seat bursts into a storm of tears.

CHAPTER VI.

"SAVED, by Jove, for the second time to-day," murmurs Captain Parker, as he tightens the reins over the arched neck of his thoroughbred. "How the fellows would stare if they knew how determined I was to run my neck into the noose! Well, it is just as well to have it over and done with, like the measles, *et cætera*, I suppose. I'll have to read the young ones a terrible lecture about the absurdity of an army man marrying, and the burdensomeness of marriage in general to sober up. It was the old girl's doing, I suppose; though, by Jove, I ought to be obliged to her for favoring me with a new sensation in this *fin de siècle*, for I generally have to take care they don't hook me unawares. Got a title in view for the little one, I suppose. I wonder—bah, what the mischief is the use of wondering about it,—she simply took a very school-girl way of answering me. Headache, indeed, with her color and vivacity!" He gives his horse a cut with the whip. The animal trembles with surprise, then bounds forward, and requires the undivided attention of his rider the rest of the way.

Captain Parker flings the reins to a trooper and dismounts at his quarters as the bugle sounds for dress parade. He stands for a moment, tugging at his golden mustache, and idly flicks a speck of dust off his riding-boot, with his whip. Then mutters through his white teeth, "Oh, confound it," and hurries into his full dress.

CHAPTER VII.

IT is recreation hour at Hammer College, a school for young ladies, at Richmond. The college itself is a gloomy, dingy, depressing old building, surrounded by a high brick wall. Its crowded gables and shaded porticos seem to be continually frowning. Even the bright afternoon sunshine fails to lighten its gloom. The walls have a ghostly look; the corridors echo weirdly. It is recreation hour. Several of the graduates are assembled in a room at the eastern end of the upper corridor.

The room is furnished with a narrow little bed; a table piled high with dictionaries, reference books, senior studies, music and exercises—all, for a wonder, neatly arranged; a toilet-stand, over which hangs a mirror whose reflections remind one of "the crooked little man who lived in a crooked little house"; a few chairs, though to be sure the mantel, with the trunk under it for a footstool, makes a seat always in demand. There is a bunch of roses in a cracked old vase. A sort of gala air prevails in the apartment; an unusual neatness surrounds the whole.

"How nice everything looks," exclaims a voice and a head of brown curls is thrust in the door, followed, after a moment's survey of the room, by an infinitesimal figure. "I say, girls, do you think she is coming?" asks Miss Gaybraith.

"Come in, Gay, and shut the door, if you don't

want every member of the faculty down on us," says Fannie Bomar.

"Who on earth discovered that wonderful find?" says Miss Gaybraith, looking at the blazing grate.

"Made a raid on the coal bin," says Puss proudly. "I thought it a shame for her to come and find only our measly little allowance of coal. Nothing is more doleful than to come into a cold room after a long railway journey," kneeling in front of the open fireplace with a corn-popper in her hand and dexterously shielding her face from the heat with a copy of "Trench on Words."

"I met the old cat as I was going downstairs," continues Miss Griswold, "and told her I was on my way to the study-hall, fired with the laudable ambition of cleaning out my desk, and received her motherly encouragement in the herculean task, so when I met her coming back, she thought my apron was full of trash."

"You'll go to Congress yet," says Dot Gaybraith, admiringly.

"I tell you one thing, my loved ones, if she is not here for the English exam. to-morrow, she might just as well stay away, for old Hammer wouldn't give her an especial exam. to save her life. Whew, how the old girl does hate her!" says a young woman at the window.

"You can depend on Van's being here, however," says Miss Gaybraith, undisturbedly. "She always comes in on the home-stretch, after scaring us half out of our senses."

"The train must be late," says the girl at the window, peering anxiously down the street. "I wonder if

old Hammer could have ordered her sent to the den on her arrival?"

"Not she," answers Fannie. "I can see Viva draw herself up and say, 'Tell Miss Hammer that I am tired now, and will go to my room first, if she doesn't mind.' That is why Miss Hammer hates her so. She can do nothing but send her to bed without her supper, or make her write yards of French exercises, and Viva receives her punishment as though a favor had been conferred. I believe the old girl would delight in striking her sometimes. And if the poor old thing is unwise enough to cross swords in a war of words, she is always beaten. Viva, with that keen, sarcastic wit of hers, crushes the enemy utterly—though it is not so much what she says, but what she somehow silently and wondrously conveys. She cannot be punished for holding her head high, a haughty bearing, or for looking straight through one at the horizon."

"*C'est vrai*, my sapient Fan," says Puss, carefully pouring her corn on a newspaper and refilling the popper. "I sometimes wonder if that cold, on-the-defensive young woman we see in the schoolroom is our bright, fun-loving Van."

"Won't our fair underteacher rejoice if she should fail to come?" says one of them.

"Oh, Miss Cockerill is furiously jealous of her," laughs Gay. "Well, the poor thing is so fearfully in love with Professor De Solla, and he, dear fellow, is equally in love with Viva. Now, we all know that Miss Cockerill can no more afford to take elocution lessons than I can afford to buy the throne of England, and it takes nearly all her salary to pay for them, but

she simply takes them so that she can see him. To-day, in class, Jen Miller asked me if Van would come to-night—he is too shy to correct us for talking, hence his class-room is not noted for its order. I said yes, she had written so. He turned around so suddenly that he dropped my paper on 'Richard Grant White's Criticism of Lady Macbeth,' which he was correcting, and when I smiled significantly at Jen, he saw me and his face became the color of my new red Oxford ties."

"I would like to have seen Miss Cockerill's face," says Puss. "I think I'll develop a sudden talent for histrionic art, and take elocution for the pleasure of seeing the meeting and the effect it has on the Cockerill."

"I have a letter for her," says Dot. "I was nearly caught at it too—it seems to me my hand is getting larger. I cannot get it in the letter-box half so well as I used. I heard some one coming and jerked my hand out with great difficulty, and the old tin box rattled so that I thought I was done for."

"For heaven's sake, little Gaybraith, don't grow any more," says Puss as she poises the popper and scorches the corn in her horror. "What will we do for mail if the smallest girl in school dares do such a mean trick as to wear a size larger glove than five and a fourth?"

"It is from Cadet Carlyle," continues Dot. "I'd know his writing anywhere. He was awful spoony on her when he visited us last fall. Cousin Will Harris, who spends all of his holidays with us, since papa became his guardian, is his roommate. Will wrote to me asking if he could bring his friend with him; I answered, of course, I'd be delighted, never dreaming

but that he would fall a victim to my manifold charms; but no, indeed, he never looked at me, except when duty to his hostess compelled, and went down before Van, as Will said, 'with the first dash out of the box.' Not that I blamed him, she is such a darling, but I was half inclined to envy her; he is just lovely, so bright—he is quite the life of the class. He will be graduated in June. Oh, girls, you just ought to see him—he is so gay and popular, the fellows call him Prince Charlie. His name is Charles, you know."

"It is warranted never to run down," says Fannie Bomar, looking at her in mock wonder. "Will some one stop it while I inquire the time?"

"What news, sister Anne?" asks Puss of the girl at the window.

Gladys Wilmer, a pretty little creature with big, pleading eyes, soft fair hair and a rosebud mouth, turns around, with a sigh:

"None. I don't believe she is coming at all."

"False prophetess! Behold your most faithful returned to the fold," says a voice, as the door is thrown open and Miss Van Velssler stands revealed to their delighted gaze.

There is a rush made for her that would do credit to any college eleven. One takes off her hat; another secures her coat; they ply her with questions galore, none of which she is able to answer for the clatter they keep up. She draws a chair up to the fire, and rests one little boot on the fender, while she takes the shell pins out of her loosely twisted hair, and attempts to throw them on the table, but they land in all directions over the floor.

"What news at this end of the line, my fair ones?" she inquires, as she helps herself generously to popcorn.

"What could happen?" asks Miss Bomar reproachfully.

"Only Susan Anne, our lady principal, has been a degree worse than ever since you left."

"Yes," says Viva, as she throws back her head and drops an extra large grain of corn between her red lips, "it puts her out if I am not here for her to empty the vials of her wrath on my devoted head. She is always more approachable after we have had an unusual fight—like opening the valve of an engine and letting off steam. Anything else?"

"Nothing, I believe," says Miss Gaybraith, vainly searching her brain for a piece of news. "Only that Professor De Solla is as desperately in love with you as ever, and the Cockerill is as jealous as—"

"Young ladies!" says a voice at the door, and Miss Lucy Cockerill is facing them with flashing eyes. She is slightly under medium height, and of stout proportion; neutral tinted hair, politely termed light brown; eyes of light blue, and her cheeks are startling red for the other coloring. In fact, as Dot once said, "She looks as if she had been suffering with toothache in either side of her face and had applied a blistering mustard plaster to each cheek."

She stands in the doorway and looks at them; the rage on her face is dreadful to see; as her gaze falls upon Viva her small eyes kindle and blaze with a deadly hatred; if looks could kill, Viva would die in torture before them, and, as the novel writers say, "This story need not have been written." Miss Cockerill re-

covers herself so quickly that one can almost believe that one's eyesight had been at fault. The almost Dutch countenance, the hard metallic voice betray no emotion as she says:

"Miss Hammer's compliments to the young ladies, and by the sudden uproar and noise she is aware that Miss Van Velssler has returned. She will please come to the study at once."

"You will please say to Miss Hammer that I would have gone to her on my arrival, but it was impossible until I had removed some of the dust of travel, and that I will do myself the pleasure of seeing her before supper," says Viva, not appearing to notice that Miss Cockerill has spoken no word of greeting, and with a glance that plainly indicates that the interview is ended.

Miss Cockerill stands for a moment, fairly consumed with rage, but cannot think of anything to retort, so departs.

"The old sneak!" says Fannie Bomar, as soon as the door closes. "The idea of her creeping up and opening the door before we heard a sound. Well, I hope she feels a living illustration of the time-honored expression, 'Eavesdroppers hear no good of themselves.'"

"You have only added another grudge to the already long list she owes me, Gay," says Viva wearily. "Now clear out, every last one of you; I am worn out. Be gone!" with a gesture in imitation of Miss Cockerill's attempts at tragic posing that brings down the house, and the old halls echo with their girlish laughter as they troop out.

"They are all very faithfully fond of me now, and there is not one among them who would not gladly take upon herself some of the punishments heaped upon me," says Viva, as she glances about the room they have taken such pains to arrange for her coming. The coal Puss has schemed to get; the letter little Dot has run such risks to secure; the flowers Gladys has spent the last cent of her allowance for,—she does not undervalue one favor, but she sighs as she unfastens the tight travelling gown and puts on the pink dressing sacque Fannie Bomar has placed for her, in case her trunk did not come.

"Bah! they like me now because I am one of them, fight their battles, help them with their lessons, and am a fine confidante. How will it be after we have left school a few years? Here we are on a level footing, and neither money nor position is a feather's weight. A girl's position at boarding-school is won by herself, on her wit, gayety, or powers of magnetism. But mammas and chaperons, when they find I am no longer the niece and *protégée* of Miss Carrol of Glenwood, will frown down the intimacy; will show them the uselessness of showering favors and invitations upon one who cannot return them. These same entertaining powers being a trump card against me—who cares for a dangerous rival? And they—well, they, poor little things, at first they will feel sorry and hurt, will rebel and vow they will be true, will remember lovingly the old days of honest companionship; but constant dropping wears a stone, and they will finally agree, with wise mamma, that it is best to introduce to the world as one's friend a girl who can be of some social advantage, and

one who could come to the assistance of the family in a pecuniary way should brother fancy her. Yes, in the end they will fall in with the maternal ideas and give me the cut direct. However, it is pleasant while it lasts," and getting up and standing in front of the blazing fire, for a moment, she throws her beautiful arms over her head and paces up and down the little room. Finally she stops in front of the table and picks up the letter, and going to the window reads it by the fast-fading light.

She reads page after page, written in a boyish scrawl; it is an amusing jumble of barracks gossip, news, wit, and passionate adoration of herself. She has to strain her eyes to read the last lines; then she folds it up, and with a smile and a lightly whispered, "Dear old Prince Charlie," tucks it in her belt, and, twisting up her wealth of hair, arranges her toilet and descends to "the den."

CHAPTER VIII.

It is Easter holidays at Hammer College. The last lessons were said yesterday morning, and at noon most of the girls left for their homes, only a few remaining at the college. Trunks were hurriedly and noisily packed; lessons and discipline were forgotten for a space, and good-byes were merrily said, while pretty eyes looked forward to a week of bliss—seven whole days free from bondage. Of course, this earth is a jolly old world and full of fun and pleasure. Everything is *couleur de rose*. This was yesterday, and now two of them have reached their destination.

"I wonder who will meet us?" says Gay, putting her head out of the window. "I hope Dev has managed to get off. I want you to meet that handsome scamp of a brother of mine, Van, for I know you will like him. As old Miss Hanks says, 'though I say it who shouldn't,' he is the only man I know who is worthy of you."

"Considering the limited number of your acquaintances, I ought to feel insulted, but will take it in a kindlier light," says Van, as she leans forward and gives her hat a coquettish little tilt before the mirror between the windows of the car.

"Here we are. Get the satchel! You would enslave Dev for life if he saw you get out of the car with only that small bag. He says he would get a divorce from

a woman who travelled with as much hand baggage as I do."

The train pulls up with a shriek, and they are on the platform in a moment more.

"How do you, Hopkins?" says Gay. "Take Miss Van Velssler's bag, and here are our trunk checks. What have you brought for us—the road-cart? That is nice. I thought Mr. Harris would meet us," looking disappointedly about.

"The young gentlemen wired they was held over by a wreck ahead, beggin' yer pardons," says Hopkins, as he takes the bags, "and that they'd be in on the midnight express from Hartford."

"Young *gentlemen*?" says Miss Gaybraith, as they are whirled over the perfect turnpike. "Then my gallant cousin has, as his guest, his roommate, Naval Cadet Carlyle. Oh, Van, Van, you have much to answer for!"

"I didn't know he was coming," she answers, with a laugh. "I have not heard for some time. I suppose his letters are reposing in Susan Anne's desk. Little Dot, you are not half doing your chores. You must attend to the mail better. We cannot afford to support you in idleness."

"Well, he'll have to put off the pleasure of beholding your Hellenic countenance till to-morrow at breakfast. No doubt he will have poor Will up at the crack of day in hope of seeing you, which shows how little he knows you, expecting you to be up at such a time."

Their gay laughter rings out across the meadows. Youth laughs easily, but it feels sorrow more keenly than age—yet who would not be willing to suffer

doubly for the pleasure of enjoying? That is what we envy in youth, the power to feel. What matter if it be anger, hate, joy or love, so our blood runs riot once more, so our pulses quicken again, so this terrible burden of insufferable *ennui* leaves us, so this leaden heart beats again, and we are conscious of emotion?

"Is there any land so beautiful as this fair Kentucky of ours?" says Dot, as she gazes fondly at the stretch of magnificent country. "Do you ever see such sunsets as we have here? Look at that view over there, at those great purple hills,—the mist which surrounds them looks like a delicate bridal veil of priceless lace. The sun sinks beneath the horizon lingeringly, as though he would fain look longer on so fair a sight. Oh, my Kentucky, land of beauty, fine horses and—"

"Ahem! Leave out the rest," from her companion.

They are entering the gate. Their laughter reaches the people on the veranda. The cart stops in front of the high steps. Gay springs out, and, going up the steps with a rush, is clasped in her mother's arms.

"Welcome to the old Kentucky shore once more, my dear," says Mrs. Gaybraith, as soon as she is freed from her daughter's arms, which have worked sad havoc with her carefully arranged laces.

Meanwhile Dot is gathering up her numerous satchels and lamenting the loss of one, which turns up serenely after a moment's search.

"Has Dev come, mother mine?" she inquires, as they go into the house.

"I suppose not, else he would have condescended to welcome us, even if it is beneath his dignity to meet at the station 'a bread-and-butter schoolgirl.'"

It is a family joke, Dev's mad passion for older women, he, himself, being a Harvard undergrad. When chaffed about his specimens of the prehistoric age by his sister, he says he prefers to talk to women with gray hair, and he only draws the line when they get so old that they have to be wheeled about.

"Well, I suppose he'll blow in some time. *En même temps*, we are starving," adds Gay, leading the way to the dining-room.

"The chronic condition of schoolgirls," laughs Mrs. Gaybraith. "You would be a contradiction of nature if you ever had enough to eat."

"Well, to give his Satanic Majesty his due, Susan Anne does have a splendid corps of cooks.

"My dear, you are speaking of Miss Hammer, the principal," says her mother, shocked.

"That was 'drawing it mild,' as Dev says," continues Miss Gaybraith, doing justice to a plate of cakes.

After supper they go to the back drawing-room, and Viva seats herself at the piano, while mother and daughter sit by the fire and plan little informal gayeties for the coming week.

"Ah, my dear fellow, you seem to be monarch of all you survey," says Mr. Carlyle, the next morning, entering the breakfast room at Riverside.

"Yes, we are a lazy household," says his companion, turning away from the window. "The bell rang some time ago, but they are all late, as usual."

"Shall I serve breakfast, sir?" says a servant, entering.

"Oh, no, we will wait for the ladies, John," answers Mr. Harris. "Aunt Marion believes in her

guests doing as they please in these things, and will probably lecture us roundly for waiting for her, thinking we would have preferred our breakfast when we first came down."

"Well, I wouldn't. I prefer my coffee to be poured out by a pretty woman," says Prince Charlie, sinking down in a big chair, and picking up the morning paper.

There is such a difference between the two. Charlie Carlyle is pronounced by the fair ones who visit Annapolis to be "decidedly the handsomest man in the corps." He makes a goodly picture to look upon, certainly, with his fine height; his well made limbs, their every muscle brought into full play by a course of scientific training in the "gym"; his perfect head, covered with rippling golden curls, cropped ruthlessly short in the "regulation cut"; eyes "like violets dipped in dew," as one sentimental young woman said of him; his well-shaped mouth, always ready for laughter, and showing between the lips strong, white teeth. He looks like a young Apollo, the perfect idealization of boyish beauty and strength. His dearest friend is not handsome. No girl has ever exclaimed over his beauty on the parade grounds. He is scarcely medium height; is rather slender; dark gray eyes, surrounded by shadowy circles—eyes which look bravely and squarely into one's own—who can discern the depth, the purity of soul that lies in them? There is a quietness, a precision, about his movements that shows a lack of nervousness. He is a man whom children have a natural fondness for, whom women call upon freely when in trouble and trust instinctively, and who is immensely popular with and looked up to by his own sex, by whom he is voted

"an all-round good sort and the genuine stuff, you know." He will always be guided by reason, the philosophical eyes say. The tanned hand tells his character again; the length of palm shows a love of detail, a desire to investigate calmly and thoroughly before arriving at a conclusion; the second joint of the fingers, precision, carefulness; the large, well-developed thumb, logic and reason, balanced by an equal amount of will-power and determination. No, Will Harris certainly does not suffer when compared to his friend. Not handsome? Well, how do women reckon beauty?

"Have I kept every one waiting?" says Mrs. Gaybraith, coming in hurriedly. "How do you do, Will, my dear?" as she is folded in the arms of her nephew. "I am delighted to have you with us again, Mr. Carlyle," she continues, going up to him and giving him her hand.

"And I am delighted to be here again, I assure you," he answers with his bonny smile.

"Those girls not down yet? Well, if two charming cadets are not sufficient attraction, nothing will reform them," she says, laughing as she takes her seat.

Mr. Harris eats his breakfast in silence, and heartily enjoys the anxious look Prince Charlie casts at the door, while he keeps up a running fire of questions about the neighbors to his hostess. Finally he is rewarded. Viva enters, gowned in a blazer suit of blue tweed, the coat opening over a vest of white duck, and fastened across the chest by two large brass buttons.

"How do you do? We were sorry not to have had the pleasure of driving out with you last evening," she says brightly to Mr. Harris. "Good morning, Mrs.

Gaybraith. I think I'll sit by this individual; he seems to have managed to get every dish around his plate. It is purely selfish," she adds, *sotto voce*, as she seats herself beside Mr. Carlyle.

"I would be glad to have you even on those terms," he says devouring her with his eyes.

Gay, who has just entered, is keeping up such a clatter at the other end of the table with her favorite cousin that what they say is drowned.

"Do you know I have come nearly across three States for the pleasure of spending a few hours in your society?" he says after a time. "Our leave is so disgustingly short, it is almost worse than none."

"What is it that dissatisfied young beggar is saying about a short leave, Miss Van Velssler? Why, five days at Easter is an unheard-of long leave. The fellows are just swearing by the new Supt. on account of it," says Mr. Harris breaking in on the *tête-à-tête*.

"Eh? Soup?" says Viva, looking puzzled. "Oh, you mean superintendent," with a laugh. "While you are in cit's clothes you will please speak the language of the United States."

They leave the dining-room and pass through the hall to the balcony. The day is clear and sunshiny. The lawn slopes down to the river, glittering and writhing in the sunlight like a huge silver serpent. They stroll out into the grounds and seat themselves in a spot delightfully shielded from the wind by the conservatory.

"What shall we do?" says Dot.

"Nothing," says Prince Charlie, stretching himself in a garden chair and luxuriating in the warmth.

"Little one, run up to the house and forage around and find some banjos; we might have some music later. The Prince and Miss Van Velssler sing divinely together," says Will to Dot.

"I like that! Run, indeed!" indignantly. "That is one nuisance of being small, one is always called upon to wait upon every one else. Now no one would dream of saying *run* and do so and so to Van; if she is called upon at all, she is *requested* to do me the favor, *et cætera*."

"Well, big lady, will your extreme rotundity condescend to meander houseward slowly, with your stately gait, and bring the banjos?"

They all laugh, but Dot is not to be appeased by his tardy politeness, and refuses to move.

"I say, *mon prince*," says Will, "Aunt Marion has just received some very fine specimens in the way of ferns. You go in for that sort of thing; suppose you show them to Miss Van Velssler. You will find them at the far end of the conservatory."

His majesty gets up with haste very unbecoming to royalty, and giving Will a glance which silently swears friendship for life, says, to Viva: "Will you permit me?"

Mr. Harris watches them, with a smile in his expressive gray eyes, as they cross the lawn, and says: "They are a handsome couple, certainly. Come, *ma petite*, we will not be needed in these parts, so we'll go for a row," and he tucks Dot's arm in his and they go towards the river.

CHAPTER IX.

IT is the afternoon of the last day of their stay. Their railings are all in vain. The days have fairly raced by. Old Time has turned the glass as relentlessly as though there were no such things as disagreeable examinations awaiting one. Last night Devereau Gaybraith came, and Dot has persuaded her mother to let her stay a few days longer, to do homage to the autocrat of the household, instead of returning to Richmond, in the morning, with Viva.

Mr. Gaybraith is standing at the window, as Viva and Charlie come up the steps and on the balcony. Mr. Gaybraith sees him bend to her and say something evidently amusing, for she looks up at him a moment, then laughs merrily, and his musical laughter blends with hers.

"What a deuced pretty girl," thinks the gentleman from Harvard, with a frown, as he remembers she evidently prefers "this brass-button fellow" to his usually irresistible self. . "If I had known there had been anything like that here, I would have hurried home." Aloud he says: "What women see in brass buttons to go so confoundedly mad about I can't imagine. Fancy a woman falling in love with a man wearing that duck-tail coat," with a glance at Will's full-dress jacket.

"Don't grow envious, my dear cousin," says Will

calmly, as he turns a leaf of his book. "You'd wear it, too, only the life is too hard."

"Hard? Nonsense. It is the laziest existence in the world."

"If you tried it for a week, you'd discover it was all work, from gunfire in the morning, through hard-learned lessons in the section-rooms, drills in the afternoon, carrying guns your boasted college eight would shudder at, to taps at night, when our little iron beds and hard pillows feel like softest down."

"Well, it seems that the first classmen, at least, have nothing to do but flirt with the officers' wives."

"You mean the affair of Lieutenant Minow's wife and our classmate, Ed. Trickerton," says Charlie, who has entered during the last speech.

"Yes," defiantly meeting the searching gaze.

"Well," continues Charlie, "that was very unfortunate, but there are foolish, weak women, jealous husbands and men who are willing to be flirted with in every grade of society. Mrs. Minow threw herself in his way—positively refused to give an 'at home' without him; consulted him about her invitation list, and sent for him, if by chance he did not go to her on Wednesday afternoon, when we have half-holiday, as perhaps you know. Lieutenant Minow grew jealous, and not being able to make anything out of it but that his silly wife showed a decided preference for a fascinating first classman (he couldn't very well bring a court-martial on those grounds), why he took what petty revenge he could, and marked dear old Trick down in Math., having him in his section twice during the first term. Trick got way below two-five in Math., and

that, of course, bilged him. After he left the Academy, Mrs. Minow wrote to him a very damaging letter—it came to my knowledge quite accidentally; those weak women, who are unable to prevent such a scene have no more sense than to commit themselves on paper. But Trick was too much of a gentleman to show the letter to the proper authorities and prove that he was unfairly treated, but suffered in silence for the sake of a woman whom he did not even like—in fact, had a contempt for. As I say, there are silly women and jealous husbands in every class of society, and the man, naval officer or cit., who positively declines to be flirted with when a rather pretty woman throws herself at his head in so marked a manner, is exceptional. In no profession in the world can there be found nobler, truer, more honorable men, or fairer, purer women than in the United States Navy.”

“Bravo, *mon prince*,” says Will.

“And it is not half so bad as the affair at your *alma mater* last year,” says Dot, with wide open, indignant eyes, “when two hot-headed Westerners played poker for the hand of a Boston belle and were expelled for it. Imagine her horror at having her name in the headlines of every leading daily in the country!”

“A truce,” cries Dev. “There is Miss Van Velssler, and wearing the brass buttons too—four to one. Have mercy,” recovering his good humor.

“You came too late for the discussion,” says the Prince to her. “But you promised me the pleasure of a last row with you this afternoon. I hope you have not forgotten.”

“Take care, Carlyle, that you get back in time to

leave on the six o'clock train. We must go this evening, remember. And knowing you of old, what risks you run in catching a train, I'd advise you to pack your things before you go for your row," says Will.

"Quite right, most philosophical of cadets; you'll be an admiral yet. I'll only keep you waiting a moment, Miss Van Velssler," and he leaves the room.

After a short time he returns, the dark blue "duck-tail coat," as Dev would say, with its double row of brass buttons, fastened high around his fair throat, and fitting his superb figure to perfection. The uniform is becoming to all blond men.

"I am ready. 'Come, smile on your oarsman, your most willing slave,'" he says to Viva, bowing before her.

"A great amount of rowing you are going to do in that jacket, I'm sure. I am to row you up the stream, I suppose," she answers.

"Just so it is not up Salt Creek, I don't care."

"Take your watch, Miss Viva. You know cadets are not allowed such luxuries,—and make him remember his train," Mr. Harris called after them as they disappear down the drive.

"You sit in the rear of the boat and watch my oars, and we won't be so apt to get them tangled," says Viva, seating herself.

He gets in and tips the boat from side to side. The crushing look of mock contempt she bestows upon him shows him his little attempt at making her nervous has failed signally.

"Raise your oars and let me pull out first," he laughs. "Now, ready!"

A few strokes and they are nearly in the middle of

the river. There had been a slight shower just after luncheon; the leaves are still wet with little sparkling drops of water, and gleam like diamonds in the soft April sunshine. They cross the river and float along by the Indiana bank. They have drifted into a little bend, shaded by a drooping willow, whose branches reach almost to the water. The oars swing idly in the locks. She has half turned in her seat and faces the opposite shore. She tosses her broad hat in the bottom of the boat, and opens her light coat, being heated by the exercise. He has a view of her profile.

"How beautiful you are, my darling," he whispers, "against that swaying, glittering green background. You ought always to wear green, it brings out the richness of your hair, and the seashell tints of your complexion. I would love to paint you as you sit there, with that dreamy expression in your eyes, and those little drops of water which have fallen from the leaves in your fluffy, curling hair, and call it 'Between the Showers.' You ought to be crowned 'April's Lady.' Surely Swinburne meant you when he wrote that," he adds, twisting into a wreath a branch he has idly pulled and placing it on her head.

"Oh, Charlie, you have crowned me with weeping willow," she cries, taking it off and gazing at him with a startled look in her violet eyes.

He is silent for a moment, seeing how earnest and moved she is, then laughs as he takes her in his arms.

"How foolish, my darling," he murmurs. "You have got some superstitious nonsense in your pretty little head, taught you, no doubt, by your old negro servants. How absurd!"

She smiles into his eyes again.

"How I am to bear those miserable two years while I am on my cruise I don't see," he continues. "Every moment till I am with you again will be an agony."

"Do you feel like that?" she asks curiously.

"Will the time not seem long to you?" he demands eagerly, not noticing her question.

"Yes, I will miss you very much, but I do not feel like that," she says truthfully. "I am very fond of you," she quickly adds, seeing how badly he is taking it; "in fact, you are the only person in all the world, since auntie has gone, except perhaps Judge Vane, who is truly interested in my welfare. I look upon you as my best friend, and I give you every confidence, every trust."

"Your trust shall not be misplaced, sweetheart, I swear. Prove your faith in me by marrying me at once, before I leave. I could bear the separation if I knew you were irrevocably mine. You promised last night to become my wife after my final exam., so what difference can it make? If you mean to be true to me, marry me now."

She looks at him in utter surprise, then seeing he is dreadfully in earnest, says, "What a waste of breath. You know as well as I you cannot marry while you are a cadet."

"Then you must marry me secretly, and after my cruise I'll come for you and we can be married again with all the show of a naval blow-out. Only I must be sure of you now. You do not care very much for me, my beautiful, and I am afraid you will not stand the test of separation."

"Would you not be afraid to marry me under those circumstances?" she asks.

"Afraid? No, of nothing, so long as I have you. Then you *must* grow to care for me, seeing I love you and worship you so. Come, sweetheart, will you marry me now?"

"What would your father, Commander Carlyle, say?" she asks, fencing in the true, exasperating woman fashion.

A dark flush mounts to his brow; he loosens his arms from about her. He pictures to himself the beloved father, living so simply on his quiet plantation in Louisiana. What would that grand old retired officer, whose heart is divided between the service and his idolized son, say to such an act? He puts the thought from him.

"I don't care what any one says. The whole world might talk itself hoarse, and I'd only listen for the little word you are so maddeningly slow to utter," he says passionately.

He has pressed her so close to his breast that the eagles on his buttons have dented the rounded cheek. She closes her eyes. It is very sweet, this boyish homage he offers her. She is so alone in the world, not a friend in the whole universe. She has been so accustomed to having to decide her own course; has done such battle with the world in her short life; every inch of ground is contested at college, and it will be worse after her school days are over, when the friendships which brighten her life now are broken. He is so young, so hopeful, so determined to conquer fate, he sweeps her off her feet. He is looking at her and

waiting for her to speak. Freeing herself from him, she says:

"If I consented, such a thing would be impossible. Aside from the regulations of the navy, which do not permit the cadets to marry, we are on Kentucky soil, and you, most ancient sir, who are so anxious to rush into the galling bonds of matrimony are within ten days of being one-and-twenty. Hence you cannot be married in Kentucky without the consent of your guardians."

"We are on Indiana soil," he says triumphantly, "and a few paces down the road is the clerk of the county court, and only a little way beyond lives an Episcopal minister. I know the place well, for Will teased Dot last summer about its facilities if ever she wanted to run away. So you see there is nothing to prevent us from being married at once."

One oar is imbedded in the red mud of the bank, the other creaks in the locks, as with a seething little noise the water swishes it about. A sprig of willow blows against her face, and leaves a rain drop on her cheek; it looks like a tear. His devotion to her is very beautiful, but presently she must force herself to tell him that it must not be, that she cannot permit him to do this thing which might ruin his career.

"In June we can be married openly, before you go on the cruise," she says.

"But a thousand things might happen to prevent. I might be ordered away at once, and moreover we finish two weeks before you; your examinations will be in progress then, and do you suppose Miss Hammer would give her consent? No, indeed; she would say that

your aunt has placed you in her care, and that you cannot stir till the end of the term, so we will have to elope in the long run, and why not now?"

She glances out over the water. From the cove they are in she can see the Cincinnati packet as it passes. She watches the waves it makes as they run to the shore, then out to mid-river again. She pictures to herself what her life will be when this, her only friend, is gone. What if she should not be able to secure a position in the month allotted to her? Perhaps Miss Hammer would keep her, if she can arrange to teach the primary grade next year. She shudders at the idea.

"What emotions are you concealing under those dusky lashes?" he asks. "Look at me, Viva. I believe you are yielding. I knew you could not resist such pleading. Come," and he springs to the bank and holds out his hands to her. She rises, places her hands in his, and he leads her up the path.

The license is obtained with small ceremony, and they stand waiting on the steps of the little church. The sexton opens the door, and in a few minutes the old minister, who had been peacefully eating his toast and tea when he was notified of the pair awaiting him, comes slowly in, gowned in his white robe.

"I require and charge you both, as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment, why ye may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it," reads the old man, his weak, trembling voice sounding strangely through the empty church. Finally he pauses, looks over his glasses and waits for the ring.

They look at each other blankly for a moment. They had not thought of a ring. Then Charlie remembers his class ring, and draws it off and places it on the third finger of her left hand.

“‘Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder,’” falls upon their ears. It is all over. In spite of the regulations of the United States Navy, by all the laws of God and man, they are irrevocably married. She has forgotten the careful training Miss Carrol of Glenwood has taken such pains to bestow, and he has forgotten his duty to the Government whose uniform he is wearing. They pass silently out into the crimson evening light. The old rector glances curiously after them, then with a sigh, perhaps for his own lost youth, goes slowly back to his lonely cup of tea.

“Now you are mine forever,” says Charlie as he raises her hand to his lips and kisses the ring.

She is very pale. Her large eyes have a frightened look in them. After all, what a mad thing it is! What would Miss Hammer say? At this thought a shudder passes over her.

“Look!” she says, glancing at a tiny watch in a crystal ball hanging from her belt, “you will probably miss your train.”

“Good heavens! I had forgotten it. We must hurry.”

It had rained slightly while they were in the church. The ground near the boat is very wet. She steps on the pliant ground, and one little slippered foot sinks up to the ankle in the mud. Putting one arm about her, he lightly swings her into the boat.

“I want you to promise to send me, by to-morrow

morning's express, the slippers you are wearing. Will you, Viva?"

"Yes, I promise; only hurry," taking up the oars.

When they reach Riverside, Mrs. Gaybraith, Dot, and Dev are assembled on the balcony.

"I feared the boat had capsized or that something had happened," says Mrs. Gaybraith anxiously. "Will went half an hour ago. He left word for you, Mr. Carlyle, that he could not wait, and hoped you would be able to explain satisfactorily your delay to the commandant."

"I am very sorry, but we went too far down the river, and the current was very strong coming back," says Charlie.

"He has evidently proposed and been accepted," thinks Dev as he looks at Viva and keenly observes the large class ring on her hand.

"Well, we are glad it is not an accident, and that we will have you another evening," says Dot lightly. "And, Van, you have just twenty minutes to change those wrecks of once lovely slippers and get ready for dinner," leading the way into the house.

Mr. Carlyle flashes her a look at the mention of the slippers, which reminds her of her promise, and she smiles for the first time since that mad, foolish marriage and disappears up the stairway. A housemaid is passing through the corridor as she enters her room.

"Come, Martha, and help me get ready, if you are not busy," Viva calls to her. She glances at the clock. "Scarcely seventeen minutes to make myself presentable!" she thinks as she tosses off her hat and jacket. "Heigho, what a world! The whole current of our

lives may change, the whole universe may turn upside down, but we must dress for dinner, all the same. Here am I who would give anything for a half-hour's quiet to meditate on my insane act, as auntie and Miss Hammer would call it," with a little *moue* and a snap of her slender pink fingers, intended for those spinsters respectively, as she twists her hair in a loose knot; "here am I running a perfect race with Time to array me for a conventional dinner party. What did you say, Martha? The dark green gown hanging in front of the wardrobe," indicating a gown that has seen long service at the concerts and recitals at Hammer College. "The idea of this being my wedding gown, when Gladys thought it too rusty to bring!" as she kicks the draggled boating gown out of her way.

Martha picks it up and brushes off the mud. Viva takes off the soiled gray slippers and puts them in the box in which Dev sent her a bunch of Easter lilies this morning, then addresses it to "Naval Cadet Charles Carlyle."

"That will do, Martha; and I am much obliged to you for your assistance. Take this package and place it on the bureau in Mr. Carlyle's room. Ah, just in time!" as the bell rings. Hurriedly pinning the dainty lilies in her girdle, she goes down.

It is the next morning and very cold. The weather is still gloomy. There is a beating, drizzling rain that comes down with a steadiness that is exasperating in the extreme.

"There ought to be a law against trains leaving at such an unholy hour," says Viva, coming into the dining room, where she finds Dot struggling valiantly to

keep awake. "Ugh! the dampness goes all through one, and how uncanny the lamplights look in the faint gleams of day! How lovely of you to see me off, dear! Think of spoiling one whole day of your short holiday by rising early in the morning!"

"It *was* very much of a wrench, and I don't know that even your manifold charms would usually be sufficient to drag me from my downy couch, but it gives me the horrors to leave a place early in the morning with no one but the servants to say good-by to, and then I feel like a little criminal for not going with you."

"There, dear, don't say any more. Of course I understand that you want to see something of your brother, and I would not go a minute sooner than necessary for anything. Not having the honor of being a full graduate of Hammer College, if you arrive in time for the astronomy exam. next week it will be all right, and I don't mind going alone at all."

"Ahem; though I say it who shouldn't, perhaps, but I am going on this train, and I hope I count for something," says Mr. Carlyle, entering.

"Not you," says Dot, in fine scorn, beginning to feel the effects of the loss of her morning nap. "You'll no doubt be the nuisance that a man usually is in a car, wearing one out with your restlessness, and making one feel that one is responsible for the inconveniences of travel that an imperfect age has failed to alleviate, and that for the ills of this particular journey one is held directly accountable; all the time keeping one busy ringing for the porter, looking up the train-boy, arranging your time-card, and doing all one can to make reparation to your lordship."

"What, our own sweet Dot turned cynic? Certainly early rising is not good for little girls," laughs he. "Any way it is unfair to condemn me without a trial. I but ask the opportunity to take you on a railway journey with me, to prove to you what a treasure I can be."

"You are safe in offering," as her tiny hands flit over the cups. "Come, Viva, tear yourself away from the fire long enough to eat something."

"I can't," shivering. "I do not want anything; besides we get to Louisville in time for breakfast."

"At least let me bring you some coffee," says Charlie, placing a gypsy table on the rug beside her and putting a cup of coffee and a plate of buttered rolls on it.

She smiles and stirs the coffee, but they notice she does not drink it.

"The cart is ready, and only twenty-five minutes to drive to the station," says Hopkins, entering.

Dot picks up Viva's jacket and puts it on her, fastening the collar high about her throat. Viva submits passively to having herself wrapped to an unusual degree.

They go to the front door, and as it is opened a gust of wind bursts through the hall, blowing up the mats and shaking the chairs.

"If I were in anything but a house gown, I'd certainly go with you, Van. I am afraid something will happen to you. I have a strange presentiment about it," says Dot, with tears in her eyes.

"Nonsense," says Viva, pressing the little hands she holds. "I have travelled alone before, and Mr. Carlyle will be with me as far as Louisville, and after

that the only change will be just from one car to the next."

The horses tear impatiently at their bits and shake the water viciously from their manes. Good-bys are said hurriedly. Charlie goes down the steps. Viva is about to follow him. Dot springs forward.

"Don't go yet, Viva," she says; "I cannot let you," clasping her arms about Viva and, tiptoeing, raises her face to be kissed. Viva takes the little figure in her arms and strokes the brown curls. "I wish I were going with you," says Dot wistfully.

"So do I, little one; but you will come soon. Now once more, good-by," unclasping the clinging arms and running down the steps before they can detain her again.

"We will have to drive rapidly or miss the train again," says Charlie, as he places Viva on the side sheltered by the curtains, wraps the rugs about her and seats himself beside her. "Ready, Hopkins," he says to the groom.

"Go in the house, Dot; you will take your death of cold," Viva calls out.

Dot shakes her head. As they stop to open the gate, they look back and see a little figure standing in the doorway, with her brown curls all damp and the wind blowing her scarf out behind her.

"Dear little thing," says Viva; "if we were parting for ages, she could not have felt it more."

"If she, a mere child, could not bear to part with you for a few days, how could you reasonably suppose I could put up with the idea of not seeing you for two years and fearing all the time I might lose you?"

The damp wind blows her hair back from her face, but even the dull, gray morning light fails to find a flaw in her complexion. It is faultless. When they arrive at the station there is the usual bustle that train-time engenders at a small place. The ticket agent tells them that the train is forty minutes late. The waiting-room is small, dreadfully overheated, and suffocating with tobacco smoke. Viva suggests that they remain on the platform, which is fairly well sheltered from the weather. He arranges a seat for her on a baggage truck, and covers her with his top coat, which he declares he finds too warm.

"Ah, sweetheart, you are really mine! I have to keep telling myself so, to prevent my thinking it is too good to be true. When I saw my ring on your hand this morning, I could scarcely refrain from claiming you before them all. You shall never regret it, I swear. Promise me that you will not want it undone."

"How can I say?" she answers, looking far away, while a shadow, perhaps of coming evil, crosses her face. "I have simply bound irrevocably my best friend to me. I do not see why I should regret it. You know I have made no pretence of deceiving you. I do not care for you as you do for me—"

"That would be impossible," raising her hand to his lips. She does not seem to have heard him. Her eyes are looking into space, as though she is trying to pierce "the future's great veil." Withdrawing her hand from his, she continues:

"No, I cannot say whether I will ever want it undone or not; but I will always care for you as I do now, at least, and I will be true to you."

"You could not help it," he says, "you will be true to yourself—

" 'And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.' "

A freight train comes in with the sharp, piercing shriek of its kind, and is sidetracked for the passenger.

"If our train does not come soon, I fear we will miss connection at Louisville," says Charlie.

"Well, I reckon you'll do it, any way," says the express agent, who is passing. "There is a washout up the road, and last night's express is waiting yet at the junction, and you will catch 'em before the road is passable."

"What a joke!" says the Prince. "Fancy running in on Will! I can picture his disgust, especially when I tease him with his crushing little remark about hoping I could explain my delay to the commandant," and he throws his handsome head back and laughs merrily.

Viva tries to frown down his evident enjoyment of his wrong-doing, but finally gives way and laughs with him.

The station hands pause in their work for a moment, to look at Viva and Charlie, then continue piling up the heavy trunks more light-heartedly. Youth, with its fire and vivacity, always inspires energy. One can but enjoy its merriment, even though "one sees the folly of it."

At last their train comes. They reach the junction, after a short run, and are attached to the express.

"Oho, one time the early worm was a duffer to be

out!" says Charlie to Mr. Harris, as he enters the sleeper.

"You are a confounded nuisance—ah, beg pardon, Miss Van Velssler," says that gentleman, rising and tossing his pillows, books and satchel into the next section. "But I might have known something would happen. I firmly believe it was an especial dispensation of the evil one that caused this bridge to be washed away, because this *protégé* of his was left behind, and so that he could prove an alibi to the commandant. Here are the morning papers with an account of the affair: the down train ran off the bridge and several lives were lost. We will be delayed twelve hours, as, of course, we cannot reach Louisville for the morning train. We are due there now."

"It was certainly a piece of luck for Mr. Carlyle that, as there was an accident, it occurred last night," says Viva as she reaches out for the *Courier-Journal*.

Mr. Harris observes his class ring on her hand; she sees that he does, and smiles at and appreciates his sudden and violent interest in the landscape. They make themselves as comfortable as possible—the car is not crowded—and spend the morning pleasantly, reading, in turns, a new play, the present sensation, and with a basket of fruit within easy reach.

At last they pull out and reach Louisville about one o'clock.

"We would better have our luggage transferred to the other depot, go to the Willard Hotel for dinner, then take a drive," says Charlie.

"That would be pleasant," says Viva, "if one does not care what sort of weather one drives in."

"What better would you want?" says the Prince. "Hasn't it cleared off beautifully? And who ever saw Louisville when it was not delightful to drive over her perfect streets? Even an hour after the equinoctial storm, it is enjoyable."

"The Board of Trade here ought to engage you as an advertising medium," says Will.

When they arrive at the hotel Mr. Carlyle says: "Will, I'll register and engage the carriage, while you go to the parlor and wait there for me with Miss Van Velssler."

He pauses before the name, and, for the first time it strikes them both she has no right to it. He is seized with an absurd desire to call her Mrs. Carlyle. He goes to the office. The clerk hands him the pen with a flourish. He writes in his boyish scrawl, "William Harris, U. S. N.," and underneath, "Charles Carlyle and wife, Louisiana." He has the grace to leave off the letters after his name. "We are only here *en passant*, and no one knows us. What can it matter?" is the thought with which he consoles himself for his childish act.

No one noticed that as they were getting out of the carriage Mr. Carlyle dropped one of his white gloves. A woman, passing, looked at the party a moment, and murmured to herself: "Could that have been Viva Van Velssler? Those men certainly looked like the photo Dot has on her bureau of her cousin and his roommate. Ah, I thought so," picking up the white glove and reading the name on the inside. "I'll investigate," and Miss Cockerill turned into the hotel, her small eyes glittering like a basilisk's, and her red cheeks more aflame than ever.

Going up to the register, she read the names; inquired of the clerk the plans of the party, and then to make assurance doubly sure, she went up to the dining-room door and saw them as they sat at the table. Charlie was bending towards Viva and laughing at some remark of hers; Mr. Harris was waiting upon her with courteous solicitude. They looked the picture of happiness. Miss Cockerill gazed at them a moment, then hurriedly lowered her veil and turned away. First taking the precaution to take down the number of the register and the page, with the name of the hotel, though there is no likelihood of her forgetting either, she wrapped the paper about the white glove, and storing both away in a satchel hanging from her belt departed.

"We three will not dine together again soon," says Mr. Harris, as he pushes aside his coffee-cup.

"Quit croaking, old raven, and don't spoil the delightful present by the reminder that it is fleeting," says Charlie.

"Stern duty compels me to inform you that time is," says Will, laughing.

They get up, Will lifting Viva's chair aside for her to pass, then following her and Charlie down the aisle. Viva and Charlie certainly are a handsome couple; as they pass out of the room together many admiring eyes follow them. The dark-blue serge travelling gown she is wearing is identically the color of his uniform.

"Who is the remarkably pretty girl with the brass-button fellow?" a young railroad man asks the man with whom he is dining. "Look as though they might be brother and sister."

"No," says the friend, glancing over his paper, "he is too attentive by far. Their coloring is somewhat the same, though hers is richer, more of a red."

The railroad youth loses interest, and buries himself in a document showing that the other road has been cutting the rates *sub rosa*.

"I'll go down and see if the carriage has come," says Will, as they stop at the rotunda.

"While I run over to Wolfe's and get a package I ordered a few days ago. I'll only be gone a moment," says Charlie.

In a few moments he comes back with a package in his hands.

"I want you to promise to wear this always for my sake, sweetheart," he says, going up to Viva and taking out of the box a slender gold bracelet fastened with a tiny heart set with pearls, and across the back of the heart is engraved "Sweet." The workmanship is exquisite.

"It is beautiful," she says. "It would not be hard to promise always to wear anything so lovely."

Taking her hand, he clasps it on her firm, strong, though delicately moulded wrist. At this moment Will enters. He has come too far to retreat, and hesitates, when Viva calls him to her.

"Is it not lovely?" she says holding up her arm.

"It is perfect," taking her hand and pressing it warmly between both his own. "And there is no one I had rather have seen place it there than my best friend," his true gray eyes looking into hers with kindly interest.

"Thanks, old fellow," says Charlie, laying his hand on the shoulder of his friend.

A bellboy appears, gathers up their satchels and books, and leads the way to the elevator.

"We drive out Chestnut Street to the river, I suppose," says Viva, as she arranges the robe.

"No, indeed!" says Charlie, shocked beyond expression. "Don't you know that Louisville is nothing if not fickle, and the Chestnut drive is no longer *comme il faut*? The swell set drive only on the Third Avenue Boulevard."

"So glad you told us. Think of being guilty of such a *faux pas*!" laughs Will, as he leans back in a corner of the carriage.

The air is crisp and delightful, after the storm of yesterday. The top of the carriage is thrown back. They go out Third Avenue, with its double line of magnificent homes, and through the Court, with its air of dignified exclusiveness, returning through Central Park.

"To the C. and O. depot," Will finally says to the driver. "A great idea that was, Miss Viva, of taking our belongings from the hotel, to save the trouble of returning for them. Our train leaves ten minutes before yours, I believe. We will see you on, then make a rush for our car. I wired for your berth this morning from the junction."

"You did?" says Charlie in surprise.

"Of course, knowing better than to leave a matter requiring a little forethought to you."

"If there is a person I'd like to banish eternally from the light of my presence and have a stinging contempt for, it is one who goes through the world showing one's little deficiencies, and with a serene conscious-

ness of a duty well performed," says Charlie. After a moment, he asks in a most conciliatory tone: "I hope, my dear fellow, you extended your usual thoughtfulness to your appreciative friend. Did you secure me a berth when you wired?"

But Mr. Harris scorns to answer, and the gentleman is left in uncertainty whether he will have a place to-night to lay his handsome head or be obliged to keep a lonely watch in the smoker.

"Hurry up, Charlie; we have no time to lose," says Will when they arrive at the depot.

As they enter the Richmond sleeper, they observe two of the Hammer girls, chaperoned by Miss Lucy Cockerill, seated in the first section.

"That dreadful, chattering Watson girl," says Viva *sotto voce* to Charlie. "The young woman who allowed herself to be interviewed by Miss Hammer about poor little Dot opening the letter-box."

One would think, however, that Viva was her best friend from the way Miss Watson gushes over her. The same is due, no doubt, to the fact that Viva has in her train two naval cadets. Viva avoids the kiss she would bestow, and somewhat calms the gush by her own reserve. Bowing to Miss Cockerill, Viva says:

"Miss Cockerill, permit me. My friends, Mr. Carlyle and Mr. Harris." Then turning, introduces them to Gladys and Minnie Watson, the latter entering at once into an animated conversation, on her part at least, with Mr. Carlyle, much to the disgust of that gentleman.

"We have been visiting a schoolmate near here, and came up this morning to do some shopping. Have you

been here all day? Oh, missed the morning train, did you? How fortunate for us!" with a coquettish little glance. "We were at the Louisville Hotel: the Hammer girls always meet there after the holidays. It is so pleasant; then we know who is going back. By the way, where were you all day?" says Miss Watson with wonderful vivacity.

Viva wonders if it is imagination, or *does* Will press Charlie's arm as he pushes him out of the way, and, going towards Miss Watson and seating himself on the arm of the section, says:

"You see we did not arrive till after one o'clock, then spent the whole afternoon in driving." Whereupon Miss Watson, aware that Charlie fails to appreciate her charms as he might, turns her attention to Will.

"Be very careful what you write to me," Viva is saying to Charlie, a short distance off. "Your letters may be read; Miss Hammer is very watchful about the mail."

"But there will be nothing to prevent your writing to me, thanks to the day pupils, who will mail your letters. Will is saying good-by. How can I leave you, sweetheart?" looking at her, with his soul in his handsome eyes. "Will you add another favor to the already overflowing list? I want your photograph taken in the boating gown you wore yesterday afternoon. I will always think of you as I saw you then, when you stood by my side at the little wooden altar, with the rain-drops in your beautiful hair, and gowned in boating—"

"But," interrupting him, "would you rather have my picture in that old thing than in my commencement gown?" with a tiny bit of vanity.

"I'd rather have it in that than in the coronation robe of a princess," he says.

"I will send it, then," slowly withdrawing her hands from his, and looking at him through the tears which fill her big eyes.

The others have risen and are in the aisle. Viva forces Charlie to join them.

"Good-by, little friend," says Will, taking Viva's hand. "I hope I will see you again before I go on my cruise."

Viva clings to his hand. She seems to have an odd fancy his presence will save her from some danger. He seems to her so good, so strong, so free from the boyish recklessness of his debonair friend. He reads something of the kind in her lifted, troubled eyes, for, bending toward her, he says:

"I wish you every happiness, my dear, and if at any time I can be of service to you, you will let me know. Call upon me as freely as Dot would. I need not tell you how gladly I would respond."

"Yes, I know; thank you," is all she can answer.

"Now, Mr. Carlyle, if I send you cards to our commencement, will you promise to come?" says Miss Watson prettily.

"I certainly will do all in my power to come," he answers, so earnestly that Minnie lowers her lids and blushes consciously, which causes the grave eyes of Will to twinkle with amusement, and that gentleman has to bite his lips to keep from smiling.

"Come, girls, let us go to the rear platform and see them off," adds Minnie.

"Do," says Charlie, falling back with Viva.

As they go through the passage which cuts the drawing-room off from the main car, Charlie manages to secure Viva's hand.

"Remember, I will live on your letters; do not starve me utterly," he whispers.

"Come," says Will, pointing to their engine, which is giving ominous snorts, as he drags Charlie off.

They hurry across the track and get on their car as it begins to move. They stand on the platform till they pass the other car, then lean forward, lift their caps and are soon lost to sight.

The girls go back into the sleeper. Miss Watson's vivacity leaves her, and she buries herself in the mysteries of a French novel. Miss Cockerill, not understanding French, is deluded by the fairy tale that it is in the course of reading prescribed by the French instructor.

Gladys knows it is useless to expect confidences from Viva, and stands too much in awe of her to question her, but quietly accepts such crumbs of information as are offered. About the holidays at Riverside, though, Gladys is curious.

"Why didn't Dot come with you?" she finally asks.

"Stayed to see her brother, who only arrived day before yesterday. Now, little Gladys, don't talk any more, I am tired," laying her head in Gladys' lap, and closing her eyes.

Miss Cockerill sits with her arm resting on the window-sill, her handkerchief in her hand and pressed to her cheek, almost concealing her face, and with her eyes fixed on the flying landscape.

"Now, my haughty one, I fancy we can have a reckoning," she thinks.

They reach Richmond late the next night, but remain in the sleeper till morning, arriving at Hammer College for breakfast. The first day at boarding-school after a holiday is always doleful. The girls who have remained have had nothing to occupy their minds but homesickness, and those who have been home and are returning feel the bondage all the more, in contrast to the recent gayeties. There are no lessons till afternoon. Viva takes her books and goes to the laboratory. There she finds Professor Wilson, instructor of Chemistry and Mathematics.

"How do you do, my dear? I heard you had returned," says the old man, leaving one of his pet experiments and going towards her. "There, child, don't shake hands with me, my hands are all stained. Well, how did you enjoy your holiday?"

"I fear some day I'll regret I went, 'Fessor," using the class name for him. They say that they all go to him with their trials and woes, and that confessor is as justly his title as professor, hence they abbreviate it.

She seats herself on his desk and leans her head against one of the astronomical globes, shielding her face with her arm.

"I hope not, I hope not," as he strokes her bowed head, a troubled look coming into his calm, thoughtful face.

He does not ask her what is the matter. That is why the girls are so fond of him: he does not seek to know what ails them and why, but recognizes that they are in trouble, and with gentleness and kindly sympathy comforts them. He soon draws her attention from herself and with her is going over the points in the mathematical examination for to-morrow.

CHAPTER X.

THE last few weeks have dragged along monotonously at Hammer College. Perhaps the only change is that the punishments have been more numerous and heavier. The lessons are required to be confined more closely than ever, if possible, to the text-books—not a sentence can be transposed; nor is the teacher permitted to ask a question beyond, “Will you begin please, Miss Blank?” What if the poor little wretches do rebel and go home? Whose loss is it, pray? Is it not the last quarter, and is it not paid for? The terms of Hammer College are strictly in advance, if you please.

“See here, Viva Van Velssler, this shall not go on,” says Puss, bursting open the door of Viva’s room and standing in a menacing attitude, her pen and tablet in her hand. “I have no objection to your being a raving maniac and calling out at the top of your lungs, ‘Halt, or your blood be on your own head!’ till the people in the street avoid the place as they would an asylum; or informing all whom it may concern, in a piercing tone, that ‘King Jo—hn doth approach!’ But I do strenuously object to your becoming a gibbering idiot and muttering in that exasperating manner. Do you know that I am in the next room trying to coax matter out of my tired brain for my graduating essay? How can you expect me to have an idea with this insane muttering going on beside me?”

"Come in, Puss. I am only practising my aspirates and some exercises in articulation. Of course, as they are only for pronunciation, they do not have to be spoken very loud, like those calls you speak of, which give volume to the voice," says Viva.

"What is the use of trying to explain true art to such a heathen?" says Miss Miller, as she turns the page of a soiled, ragged, little yellow book.

"Another of those yellow fiends pursues me," says Miss Griswold, in horror. "Once upon a time, this den was a harbor of rest for the weary and heavy laden; a place of peace and comfort—yea, even of fun and frolic. Know ye all men that now 'Old times are changed, old manners gone'; it has become an abode of harpies, who destroy sweet-eyed Peace, and make night hideous."

"Am I interrupting a rehearsal?" says Dot, hesitating in the door.

"Rehearsal is good," and Puss throws herself on the bed laughing. "No, my unsophisticated, the elocution class is not rehearsing *Richelieu*; they are only doing their aspirates. Girl, art thou so utterly devoid of art that thou canst not detect the difference between aspirates and *Richelieu*? Avaunt!"

"How is the play progressing?" asks Dot, seating herself on the footboard of the bed—the hostess having one chair, with the other one drawn up before her and piled high with books, and Miss Miller having possession of the window-sill.

"Splendidly," says Jen Miller. "Only it is a mere matter of form—the rest of us entering for the medal—as Viva has a clear walk-over." Half to herself as she

turns the page, "Cue, 'Orleans heeds the traitor.' Then I say—"

"A sample of what goes on in here," interrupts Puss. "I am tempted to give up all idea of an essay and favor my audience with something impromptu on 'Pictures from Memory's Wall,' or something as inanely bread-and-butterish, if they persist in keeping it up."

"Never! We expect great things from the brainy girl of the class, especially since Viva's genius will be handicapped by the valedictory," says Dot.

"I haven't a doubt but that Miss Cockerill could be drilled to throw a little expression in her Julie, if she had any other than my fair self for a De Mauprat," says Viva, picking up her lines.

"Poor professor did hate to cast her for the part, but Susan Ann demanded it," says Jen Miller. "It will be only an especial act of providence that will keep me from laughing outright when I gaze on her red face and say, as she enters the first time:

" 'That's my ward, my sweet Julie! Why, upon this face
Blushes such daybreak as one might swear the morning
Was come to visit Tithon.'

"It is too amusing to see the fair Lucy at rehearsal. She affects not to catch the idea of De Mauprat's lines and forces Professor De Solla to read them to her, and she becomes a most attending and passionate Julie. The poor fellow turned a purple red this morning, when she made him pose her in a thrilling scene. She would give anything if Viva would 'shuffle off this mortal coil' before commencement, so that he would have to take the part. Your best lines, Viva, are when I

tell you that it is surely better to marry than to die, and you say,

“ ‘ Scarcely cardinal, the poorest coward
Must die,—but knowingly to march to marriage—
My lord, it asks the courage of a lion.’ ”

“ That alone would win you the medal. That little devil-may-care swagger with which you go up stage is perfect.”

“ I am delighted you think so, for oh, girls, I am simply wild for the medal. I took both the parts of Marion and Julie three years ago, when I was with papa in Florida, at a winter resort, so perhaps that is why I feel at ease in the piece.”

One of the teachers knocks at the door with the mail.

“ A letter for Miss Gaybraith,” she says, handing Dot a huge missive.

“ From Annapolis, and in Cousin Will’s hand. As I heard from that gentleman yesterday, and he rarely honors me with an epistle more than once a month, this must be for you, I fancy,” says Dot, as soon as the teacher disappears, and tosses the letter to Viva, who tears off the cover and finds a letter from Charlie to herself in a second envelope.

“ My darling,” he begins, “ what a nuisance commencement week is here without you. When I see the other fellows with their sisters and sweethearts, and think of you being so far away, I grow desperate.

“ Now before I forget everything else, as I do when I talk or write to you, I must tell you how pleased my cousin’s wife is to have you with her.

“ They were both down for the final. He has been ordered abroad and will sail in about two weeks. I told

him we were to be married when I come back—and so we are, over again. He said he did not like the idea of his wife staying at a hotel alone, during his absence, and as she has no relatives, she was thinking of having an old schoolmate to be her companion, all of which is, of course, done away with now, as she will have the honor of chaperoning you. Cousin Jeff was always a favorite of my father, and he was married from our house—just before I entered the academy. Mrs. Guthrie quite won my heart by asking me to be an usher. It was the first time I was ever an attendant at a wedding. She is a pretty, sweet little thing, and quite enslaved me for life by the way she raved over your picture, and made me tell her all about you. She will go to Richmond, see you receive your diploma, and take you with her to Washington, where she will spend the next two years. Will you wait as anxiously for my coming, my love, as she will for Jeff's?

“To think I might have seen you if it had not been for this beastly physical exam! After biffing things in great shape on the mental, standing sixth in my class, the largest for a number of years, I had to be held over for the physical. My eyes have been in a very bad condition lately, perhaps from using them too much. I do not think the trouble is permanent. However, I will know in a few days.

“I went to the ball Friday night, to accommodate a classmate, whose sister and her friend materialized at the last moment, he having an engagement. It was an awful bore, though the sister danced particularly well, and the friend was a very pretty little trick. An old girl, Miss Shon, who I haven't a doubt was on the

tapis when father was a plebe., was there. She used to call herself Betty, but disguised later as Bettine, and now sails under the name of Bettina; a different ending for every half-century, I suppose. She is very stout, and like many stout women, especially when they have grown old, affects the gay young thing and the *ingénue*. Talks with pouted lips, and makes startling observations, with the seeming candor of a child. She said, after the ball, to a young officer's wife, who is half her age, 'Oh, please take me under your wing and stand here with me till my escort comes for me. The dressing-room is so crowded, and it is so confusing here in the hall, with all the officers and cadets around. Do you know that after one of these delightful academy dances, I am so tired I feel that if they would just let me lie down on the steps of the armory and go to sleep, I'd be so happy?'

"But here the fair Shon caught sight of a new officer, and forgetting her coyness, dashed through the crowd towards him. The last I saw of him, she had him safely ragged—if you do not understand navy slang, that means cornered. Ah, she was so spent like a child with play, and fain would tumble down anywhere in a dreamless sleep. I felt like telling her she could sleep anywhere in the grounds, from the south gate to the sea wall, for all any one cared.

"At supper I was next to a Miss Postern, a young woman who has honored and protected the academy with her presence and patronage for a number of years, much to the disgust of the cadets. She was shattering the reputation of a little creature who has been spending the winter here for her health, the

offence being, I believe, a very mild flirtation with the legal prey of Miss Postern, and an opera cloak which outshone the lady's own. Will, who was near attending to one of my fems, listened to her for a time, then with that dignity and self-possession which makes him so looked up to, crushed her utterly, and finally succeeded in making her ashamed of herself. In a few minutes the young woman of the opera-cloak fame passed; Will rose, went towards her, took three dances on her card and made a date for the promenade concert the next night. A young woman is fortunate who has Will Harris to espouse her cause, for he is quite a leader; the fellows just swear by him. I haven't a doubt but that if the June gayeties had lasted a week longer, Miss Opera-Cloak, I have forgotten her name, would have been a belle. The amusing part of it was that she did not seem to understand that Miss Postern was circulating this gossip about her among, and injuring her with, the cadets, but her whole time is taken up with the effort to restore her health, and her *fiancé*, who is, I hear, a naval officer, and that is why she takes such an interest in naval affairs. It is a pity she cannot know what Will has done for her. Though, after all, it is better that she does not, as it would be too bad to disturb her peace of mind, even to witness that rare thing—gratitude. I also met a Miss Sellman, who said she knew you two years ago in Atlanta. Need I say that she commanded my attention for the rest of the evening?

“Write to me, at once, sweetheart. I'll be here for a few days longer, till my case is decided—then will receive orders. Yours,
CHARLIE.”

“Monsieur De Mauprat, if you ever finish that document—looks like it might be a last will and testament—I’d like you to go over this scene in the ante-chamber with me,” says Miss Miller.

“Yes, coming,” says Viva, thrusting the letter between the pages of her Moral Science.

“Come, let us escape while there is time,” says Puss, rushing out and dragging Dot with her.

CHAPTER XI.

IT is the night of the famous presentation of *Richelieu*. Downstairs, the study hall is filled with the patrons of the school. The judges for the medal, who are the trustees and faculty, are seated away from the crowd. Upstairs, Viva's room is made headquarters, and turned into principal dressing-room.

"Take care there, and don't 'tread on the tail av me coat,' " says Jen Miller, looking taller and more gaunt than ever in the long red robes of the cardinal.

"I tell you, girls," she continues, "I don't envy the feelings of our primary teacher to-night. Fancy her disgust at having anything so unromantic as toothache and swollen jaw prevent her taking the part of Julie, and at the last moment Van having to be substituted, whereupon our own De Solla is obliged to play De Mauprat. He will look the part, and every glance that betrays his devotion to the Julie of his heart will be bitterest gall and wormwood to the fair Lucy, who is seated, Puss says, in the rear of the room, with a lace scarf draped over her head, concealing the injured side of her face. There, am I all right?" stepping back and giving her ermine robe a kick.

"Perfect," says Gladys, arrayed as François. "There, that will do, I believe," says Viva, clasping the heirloom necklace of the Carrols, gotten out of the bank for the occasion, around her neck, and surveying her-

self in the mirror. "But I regret my sword," with a sigh. "And I live in mortal dread of forgetting I am changed to Julie, and entering on De Mauprat's cue."

"You need a little more rouge on your left cheek," says Baradas, gazing at her critically, as he leans on the bureau. "And that arrow in your hair higher, so."

"The curtain is about to be rung up; don't keep the stage waiting, in the words of the 'profesh,'" says Puss, entering. "Beg your pardon, my lord cardinal, but why should your robe have been there 'in the way of a fair woman's foot'? How swagger all of you look!"

"We must go, girls," says Gladys, giving her blonde curls a last twist as she passes the glass.

"Yes, we are ready now," says Marion, laying down the make-up pencil, and feeling proudly the splendid length of her eyelashes.

The first and second acts pass off extremely well. There are only one or two almost imperceptible flaws. Older brothers, who have torn themselves away from the club to bring little sis, begin to look disgusted. Pray, what is the use of sacrificing one's self, and giving up a whole evening of one's beloved billiard room gossip, if one cannot air one's little witticisms, carefully saved up for such occasions for seasons, about amateurs in general, and bread-and-butter schoolgirl performances in particular? In the beginning of the third act, in the scene with Richelieu, Viva rises grandly to the climax, and surpasses herself. The older brothers look at each other surprisedly, and borrow a glass from some one—they never dreamed of deigning to bring their own—and wonder what species of the bread-and-butter miss

is this, who knows what to do with her hands and feet, how to manage her train, speaks with such fire, shows such talent, and oh, wonder of wonders, does not seem the least bit embarrassed when they look straight at her over the narrow little stage. De Mauprat enters and holds the feminine part of the audience, at least, spellbound. Several young ladies vow inwardly to take a course in histrionic art next session. The applause is deafening as they finish the scene and disappear behind the *portières* at the back of the stage.

"Grand, superb, fairest Julie," says Professor De Solla as soon as they are in the wings, grasping her hands in his enthusiasm. "I am proud of my pupil. You did yourself full justice. I could pay you no higher compliment." Miss Cockerill looks at Miss Hammer with a kind of I-told-you-so expression. Miss Hammer compresses her lips till her fat cheeks puff out; gives her head a vigorous jerk, till her light tousled curls shake themselves nearly into her little green eyes.

"Well," she says, "I never saw anything so indecent in my life! I might have known she would disgrace my school! Such unpardonable immodesty!"

"I congratulate you, Miss Hammer, on the marvellous talent of your two pupils, Miss Van Velssler and Miss Miller," says an old man leaning towards her.

With one crushing look the lady freezes the words on his lips, and he retires timid and abashed.

The applause continues, even though Huget and the conspirators have entered. Huget has made two efforts to say his little speech, but the words have been drowned.

"What shall we do, girls?" says Huget in the person

of Miss Walker. The conspirators giggle and hide their rosy, fun-loving faces in their hoods; but at last manage to get through the scene.

Miss Hammer's chin grows closer to her throat and she bridles with indignation, as the play progresses. Ever and anon Miss Cockerill leans toward her and whispers something which seems to add fuel to the flame.

In the last act the older brothers forget their positions of assumed *ennui*, and listen with breathless attention,—the younger ones have long since surrendered completely,—when Julie scorns Baradas, and, rushing to her husband, flings herself into his arms with passionate gladness, determined to suffer death rather than dishonor. As the curtain goes down on the last act and the judges retire to the library, Miss Hammer strides down the hall and follows them with the air of an avenging Nemesis. There is a long delay. The audience grows impatient. They turn to their neighbors and discuss the play, the actors individually and collectively, and finally lean back and silently look at the closed door. Behind the scenes, all is excitement.

"Did I do well? Do you think any one noticed when I was prompted? There is no doubt about Van getting the medal, is there? What are they waiting for?" are the questions hurled at each other with such lightning rapidity that it would be impossible to answer, even if an answer was expected.

"I tell you, gentlemen, I will not permit Miss Van Velssler to receive the medal. It is unfair. She was cast for De Mauprat, and only took the part of Julie because Miss Cockerill is ill, and Professor De Solla had

to fill a vacancy, and of course, he could not take the part of Julie, so he took Miss Van Velssler's rôle. I do not see why you cannot understand it. I must insist that you give the medal to some one else, as I cannot permit Miss Van Velssler to receive it," Miss Hammer is saying in the library.

"That settles it, then," says one of the judges, who is tired of the argument, and wants to go home, not feeling much interest in the matter any way.

"It is an outrage, and I refuse to stay and witness it," says Professor Wilson, tossing the gray hair back from his usually placid brow and leaving the room. The judges enter the room and are most heartily applauded by the long-suffering audience; the curtain is rung up, revealing the cast in line; the judges go up on the stage from the front; the medal is presented with as few words as possible to Richelieu, who is too astonished even to bow his thanks and appreciation. The rest of the cast are struck dumb. The audience is too tired and sleepy to exclaim over the decision, and hurriedly departs.

It is the afternoon after the play, and study hour. The senior class are in the library. All day between classes, examinations, and at recreation hour, they have discussed the decision of the medal. Jen Miller, honest little soul, declared at first she would not keep it. She said that she accepted it on the stage because she was too surprised to do anything else. Somehow it leaked out among the girls that the judges had decided in favor of Viva and that Miss Hammer had interfered. But the class tell Jen it is rightfully hers, and it would

be folly to try to remedy the matter. They feel worse about it because they think Viva will be compelled to teach, and in that way the medal would be invaluable to her.

This morning, after the elocution class was dismissed, Professor De Solla asked Viva to remain a few minutes.

"I cannot tell you how indignant I am about the decision," he began.

"Please say no more about it," she answered. "I had set my whole heart upon it, but I assure you I am quite reconciled to it now, though, of course, it was a shock, especially before them all. I hope I did not show it in my face, but brought my Delsarte facial exercises into use. That comes of your assuring me of getting the medal, and I was conceited enough to believe you."

"That is not the question," he said impatiently. "The judges decided in your favor, but were not allowed to give it to you, as you very well know. It will not affect your standing in elocution, however. I believe—er—I am told you desire to get a position as a teacher, and the fact of not getting the medal may do you an injury. I have decided to offer a medal to my pupils for the highest class standing," nervously placing and replacing the books on his desk. "Miss Van Velssler," going round and standing very close to her, "I have tried so hard not to tell you, but it is no use. I cannot conquer myself. I love you," he said desperately. "I pictured to myself the horror of seeing you suffer the degradation of poverty for my sake, and the torments I would endure, knowing how powerless

I would be to better things; but they are all outweighed by the delight of having you by my side, and the right to shield you from the envy, slights and insults your youth and beauty will bring upon you. It will not be so hard, little one. My last picture has received marked notice, and now that my health is restored I can take up my work in the studio again, and I will work so hard to win fame for your sake. I do not ask you to come to me now; only wait a little while and tell me that it is not impossible for you to love me."

She had sat down by his desk and leaned her arms on the books he had piled up, and her head on her arms. She raised her head as he finished, and by the pained look that crept across his face, she saw that he had read her answer in her eyes.

"I am very sorry," she began slowly, "but it is impossible; I could never care for you." She vaguely felt she was very unkind, that she ought to say something to soften the blow, but she could only gaze dumbly at him. To him she could have no fault. He asked her simply if she could learn to care for him, and she told him in as few words as possible. He did not ask her to reconsider, or to wait before she finally refused him, but accepted her decision humbly, and crushed out any faint spark of hope he may have cheated himself into possessing.

"You will do me the favor of letting me offer this medal to my class. I can do so little for you, please do not deny me this pleasure," he said.

"If you offer a medal to your elocution class and I win it, I will be glad to accept it and will prize it as a

delicate and generous assurance of interest from one I hold in very high esteem," she said, rising and giving him her hand.

His handsome Saxon face was very pale as he took her hand for a moment, then dropping it hurriedly, turned to the window.

"One moment, Miss Van Velssler," he said, as she was crossing the floor. "I detained you to give you your essay. There are one or two corrections to be made before it is handed to the principal."

She knew that he was aware that at the end of the corridor the class just dismissed was waiting to devour her with questions as to why he had detained her, and what he had said about the elocutionary contest. That, in his grief, he could think to shield her from so slight an annoyance, deeply moved her. She came back and took the paper from him.

"You are very much more considerate of me than I deserve," standing beside him and looking into his pale face. "I am very sorry that I have caused you any pain, and I hope you will soon forget me, or, at least, only remember me as a pupil who will always strive to do you credit."

He did not answer her, it was so useless to promise to forget her, he thought, and she turned sadly away, and closed the door of his lonely, dilapidated little schoolroom upon him.

There is not much study going on in the library this afternoon. There is a current of excitement running through the whole class; a restlessness pervades the room. Thirteen pairs of eyes are dutifully bent over books, only to be raised again, and some new point of

the play of last evening discussed. Puss has been sitting in the corner, with her fingers in her pretty ears, to keep out the noise. Finally she closes her book and says:

"It's no use, girls, there is no study in me to-day. My last examination paper will be a blank. I simply cannot put my mind on it."

"Well, there is only one more, thank heaven," says Jen Miller. "After next Tuesday we will no longer be the bondservants of old Hammer, but can snap our fingers in her face and be free."

Little Dot is stretched out at full length on the floor, with her elbows resting on her book, and her chin in her palms.

"Yes," she says, "it's no use trying to study. Let us put it off till after supper. I'll promise to raid the pantry for candles." Flinging her book at Viva she adds, "Brace up, Van; don't let our last memory of you be of a young woman whose countenance is worthy of that much-put-upon feminine, Mariana of the Moated Grange."

Viva is sitting by the window, looking out into the dusty little street. She has been thinking that after all it is sad to know that this is the last study hour they will be together; that in a few days they will part, possibly never to meet, and even if they should, their interests will never be the same again. The years will bring changes, other duties, and these ties, when severed Tuesday evening, will be broken for always. She knows it so well, and looks at them wondering that they do not see it, but they are only jubilant at the idea of freedom, and vow eternal friendship. At Dot's

word, she makes an effort to be gay. They must not think she is sulking over the medal.

"All right, we'll put off cramming," and taking up a banjo she sings, accompanied by Jen, who has a full alto:

"We all come to Hammer to learn to parley ;
It's Français, you know—quite Français, you know.
They make us go out sixty minutes a day ;
That's English, quite English, you know.

They say we fair Southrons need more exercise ;
That's English, you know—quite English, you know.
We say we've been out, but sometimes we tell—oh,
That's naughty, quite naughty, you know.

They make us get up in the middle of the night ;
That's Hammer, you know—quite Hammer, you know.
We button our boots by the dim candle light ;
That's Hammer, quite Hammer, you know."

Here the song stops, but Viva still keeps up the ringing catchy accompaniment. Puss startles them with:

"The fair Lucy is struck on Professor De Solla ;
He's lovely, you know—quite lovely, you know.
Wherever he goes she is sure to follow ;
For she's spoony, quite spoony, you know.

On our own little Van she is awfully down ;
Lucy's jealous, you know—quite jealous, you know.
When he smiles on Van she is sure to frown ;
Then she's wrathy, quite wrathy, you know."

The burst of laughter which follows this flow of genius is frozen on their lips. Thirteen pairs of eyes are fixed in horror upon the door, wherein Miss Hammer stands framed, a picture of outraged dignity.

"You are responsible, as usual, Miss Van Velssler,

for this levity and low concert song, which is an insult to decency in the original, and much more so in this heavy attempt at parody. You will come to my study at once. Young ladies, I am pained to say I will have to appoint a teacher to preside over the senior study hour," she says with suppressed wrath, and marches down the corridor, digging her high heels into the waxed floor in a manner that foretells battle prolonged and no quarter.

The girls are too surprised to speak till she is gone. Viva follows her without a word. They pass Miss Cockerill in the hall, and there is a look of triumph about her, coupled with an evidence of some secret strength as yet unrevealed, that is different from the glow of her usual little victories. Viva is seized with a sudden dread. She forces herself to throw it off.

"Fudge," she thinks, "has it come to this, that the Cockerill can frighten me? Yet there does seem to be more dignity about her lately. I involuntarily treat her with more respect."

Miss Hammer seats herself at her desk, her fat cheeks puffed out, and begins with bursting indignation:

"I heard, Miss Van Velssler, that you are about to commit the unpardonable disobedience of accepting a medal from Professor De Solla, after the decision of last evening. I want you fully to understand I will not permit it. Do you hear? I will not permit it. It is an insult to the trustees of this school, in their just award of the medal to Miss Miller. It is a public reproof to them and to me, and I consider it an impertinence on the part of Professor De Solla, and I have

already notified him that I will dispense with his services next year." She pauses for breath.

"Thank heaven, he had already made up his mind to dispense with yours," thinks Viva.

"I want you to sign and send him this note at once," handing Viva a note refusing the medal in the most insulting terms. Every word would be a blow to his sensitive nature. She has hurt him enough—unwittingly, it is true, but nevertheless fatally. She thinks of his honest kindly eyes as he offered her his little all of this world's goods, and tears rise to her own.

"I am very sorry to disappoint you, Miss Hammer, but Professor De Solla says the class medal has nothing to do with the contest, and my word is pledged to accept it, if my examination papers, which will be approved by the faculty, show I fairly deserve it."

Words fail the lady principal. To be treated in this cavalier manner exasperates her beyond measure. She finally masters breath to gasp:

"If you do not do as I command you, I refuse to permit you to be graduated. I think you will consider well before you wantonly throw aside a diploma of Hammer College."

Viva grows white to the lips. What will Charlie say? What will Mrs. Guthrie, his relative, who is coming to see her receive her diploma, think? She remembers once Will and Charlie were discussing an affair attracting a great deal of notice in naval circles, of an English officer failing to keep a promise, and so saving himself from a great physical danger, but imperilling the life of one of his men.

"I cannot pardon any one for not keeping a promise,

when actually given, no matter about how trivial a thing," said Will. "A man who does not keep faith in little things cannot be trusted in great ones. It shows a dishonesty, a nature that is too shrewd, perhaps, to come to grief by any open disobedience to the law, but dishonesty all the same."

"What would you have done in this case?" she had asked.

"I'd have gone, and if I had died, I'd have died game."

Standing in the dingy little study, with the last rays of the sun falling upon the pile of papers, bills, and white ribbons to be used on the diplomas Tuesday night, which litter Miss Hammer's desk, she decides to follow the advice of the cadet. She has always admired him greatly, and has said if she had a brother she would want him to be just like Will Harris. "I'll do what Will would have done, die game, and keep my promise," she thinks. Aloud she says, firmly, "I am very sorry to lose the diploma I have worked for all these years, but I am fully decided."

"You are excited now," says Miss Hammer, with exasperating pity. "I am too generous to take you at your word. You will reconsider the matter and beg my pardon on your knees, I'm sure. You will remain in your room and not hold any communication with the young ladies, for fear of inciting them to further disobedience. Retire now," with a wave of her hand that is worthy a Sultana.

In the library the seniors are in disgrace, a chaperon is placed over them to enforce study. The teacher can compel silence; but, alas, it is beyond human power

to force those twelve active minds to be applied to philosophy till they know the fate of their favorite. Twelve girlish figures assume an expectant attitude, twelve pairs of bright eyes turn toward the door when there is a step heard in the corridor, and as the noise dies away in the distance and she comes not, a note or two is written and dexterously passed between the leaves of books. In vain does poor little Miss Barker call upon them to study. At last they are dismissed, and go straight to Viva's room. A teacher stands in the corridor.

"Young ladies," she says, "Miss Hammer has bidden me say that any one who breaks the rule and holds any communication with Miss Van Velssler, will have her deportment taken down to such a degree that her general standing will be so injured as to make it impossible to receive distinction in any class."

They stop appalled. It is worse than they, even in their most despairing moments, dreamed. They manage to exist till the bell for "lights out" has rung; then, though the teacher at the end of the corridor is on the alert for a rebellion, a door next to the teacher's is slowly opened; a dark-robed figure emerges, listens at the teacher's door a moment, and gives a low whistle that sounds exactly like the wind.

"My practice in 'The Wind Storm' tells in an affair like this," murmurs Jen Miller, referring to a piece that has been the *bête noir* of the elocution class for the last quarter.

At the sound every door on the corridor is carefully opened, and the graduating class stand revealed as the conspirators.

"Coast is clear. Be ready to shelter yourselves at my wind signal, which will notify you on the first movement of the Barker," whispers Jen.

"All right, captain," and two figures robed in water-proofs for disguises steal silently down the hall and into a classroom which, with Viva's, forms a right angle. A note can be passed easily from the classroom window to hers.

Jen stands at the head of the corridor in listening attitude, and the rest of the class crouch down by their open doors and anxiously await the results. Some chalk, broken in small pieces, is thrown against Viva's blinds, which, after a moment, are noiselessly opened.

"I was afraid you would come, girls, so sat up for you. Go back at once or you will get into serious trouble. The Hammer is terribly on the war path, and for the slightest provocation might refuse to let the rest of you be graduated too."

"Do you mean that she is not going to let you have your diploma?" almost screams Dot.

Fortunately the second girl, Katherine Lenford, puts her hand over Dot's mouth.

"Shut up! Do you want to alarm the house?" she says.

"Didn't you know it?" says Viva. "Then I am sorry I told you. But unless I sign a paper she has prepared, and which does not concern you, I will not be of the festive party Tuesday night. It is only a little matter of principle, and I refuse. We have always disputed which was the thirteenth. Jen says she is because she came last, and Katherine because she is tallest. Now it is decided. Receive your diplomas in peace; mine is

the proud honor. Behold the thirteenth." She throws up her arm in mock tragedy, and unconsciously makes a weird, beautiful picture as she stands in the moonlight, her long hair falling over her dark dressing gown.

"Well," says little Dot, kneeling down by the window, "it is the meanest thing I ever heard of. But, if you care to listen to the words of a prophet, there will *be* no graduating class of Hammer College in this year of our Lord—"

A shrill wind seems to blow about the old building; in fact, the very windows seem to shake. Viva springs into bed and draws the covers up over her. The glare of a lamp is in the room, and Miss Barker stands at the door.

"I thought I heard voices in here," she says.

"None of the girls have been in my room since I came up this afternoon," says Viva, with the ease of a diplomat.

"I am very glad of it. Good night, Miss Van Velsler. I hope you will apologize to Miss Hammer, and all will go smooth and even again," pausing in the door.

"Thank you, but I will not apologize," says Viva. As the door closes, "Whew, that was a close call! If she had asked me to get up for anything and discovered I had on my boots, we would have been done for."

The next morning there is a council of war in the graduates' room, and "Rebellion, foul, dishonoring word," is declared class motto. They refuse to receive their diplomas, and orders for commencement frocks are countermanded. However, a few positive telegrams from parents and guardians, who fail to be impressed with the heroism in the matter, put an end to the little

scheme, and twelve young women sulkily permit a loving *alma mater* to claim them for her own.

Tuesday night, the favorite of the class and the valedictorian is conspicuous by her absence. Wednesday morning dawns, and they part, and Hammer College knows them no more.

CHAPTER XII.

AN April morning in Washington—could anything be more beautiful? The parks and squares are a thing of beauty—surely floral art has reached its perfection. The gay set are crowding as much enjoyment as possible into the short week of the post-Lenten season. On K street, not very far from Fifteenth, is a delightful little hotel, very quiet, but very charming. One of the most attractive rooms in the house is on the second floor—bright and airy, with furniture of light oak, pretty muslin curtains, and dainty *bric-à-brac*, suggestive of foreign travel. Its occupant, late as it is, is just opening her eyes to this world. Some one knocks on the door opening into the next room.

“Get up, lazy one. Are you doing a wager to beat the seven sleepers? Remember we go to the art gallery with Colonel and Mrs. Blair at ten. Open the door.”

“I won’t get up; it’s only dawn,” and the mistress of the apartment sinks back upon her soft pillows.

“I have some mail for you,” insinuatingly.

“Come in then; the door is unbolted.”

“Ah, I fancied that would fetch you, lady fair! Here are two very huge documents addressed to Miss Van Velssler,” says Mrs. Guthrie, seating herself by the window, after throwing up the blinds and letting in a flood of sunshine. “Do you realize that two weeks

from to-day the *Atlanta* is due at New York? And are you also aware of the fact that you are to select your wedding gown this afternoon? If you do not do credit to me on that momentous occasion, I'll fail to remember you in my will, for I know Jeff Guthrie will blame me. Another fact that I have hidden away in that great storehouse, my brain, is that when Charlie is at Annapolis and coming down here between exams., and with you going there for hops and such rubbish, I'll never get my hands on you to make you have a single gown fitted. Out with you now! I just give you time to read those letters, while I begin one to Jeff. Then if you are not half ready, I'll—" the look is awe-striking enough to dispense with words.

Viva opens the first letter. From Charlie it is.

"When this reaches you, queen of my heart," he writes, "it will be almost the second anniversary of our wedding. Can it only be two years? It seems like ages. As the days pass and I can count the time by weeks when I will see you, I grow more impatient. Dear old Will bears nobly with my restlessness and wild desire to turn time forward. My one regret is, I will be separated from him, for there is no such luck as our being detailed to the same duties. I have not the slightest fear of my final exam. My eyes are in fine shape. I have grown positively old womanish about taking care of them—all for your sake, my darling"—and so on in this strain he continues.

The two years' cruise has not changed him. He is the same headstrong madcap and class favorite. How passionately fond he is of her! Well, her lines have fallen in pleasant places. In a few weeks she will be-

come (to the world) the wife of one of the most charming naval officers in the service. He is young, bright, handsome, and adores her—what more could she want? she asks herself. Nothing, she hastens to assure herself. She leans back among her pillows and gazes dreamily out at the clear sky. Yet she regrets the last two years; she would turn back now and live them over again. They have been so sweet, so free from care. At first the Hammer College girls wrote three times a week, then their letters came less frequently, with fewer “yous,” and more “I” in them. Now they have stopped altogether, except from Puss, Jen, and the more faithful ones, who write occasionally. The rest only write when they want the address of some one, a piece of silk matched, or something done. Miss Carrol wrote once or twice from Australia, but her niece was doing very well without her, she thought, and lately Viva has waited in vain for an answer to her last letter.

“Viva is very beautiful,” Mrs. Guthrie is writing to Jeff. “She has had a very lovely time here, and might have been a great belle, but she seems to avoid the company of young men so strangely, and has a very exaggerated idea of her duty to Charlie. We have been into society somewhat, and I have entertained, in a small way, occasionally. An *attaché* of the Austrian Legation went quite wild over Viva, and a young army officer who assisted to make the presentations at the White House was very attentive, but she hardly noticed either—for all they say about the giddiness of the sweethearts and wives of naval officers who are at sea. We have arranged a few pretty, inexpensive dresses, and the wedding will take place at Annapolis, after the final

ball. You are to get my present in New York, a handsome silver comb, brush and mirror, and can add your own, in way of tray, powder-box, and any of the thousand and one trinkets that go to litter the toilet table of a pretty woman."

After a few moments she finishes the letter, and looking up, sees Viva still dreaming.

"Yes, I am coming," says that culprit, "only listen to this first:

"MY DEAR VIVA:—Come to us at once. You used to be called the class detective, because we went to you with our difficulties, which you always cleverly untangled, and your services cannot yet be dispensed with now. Dev has gotten into trouble. He has become entangled with a dreadful girl. We tried to make the best of it, and had her to come here, but there is no best to it—if you could see her! She is not the wife for Dev at all, and is constantly embarrassing us before people. We try to persuade him to break it off, but he talks a lot of nonsense about duty and honor. He is just doing it to be contrary, I know. Oh, Viva, do come. Dear old Riverside is looking lovely now, and reminds me of two years ago when we were here for Easter. Enclose a railroad pass for you that I bothered Uncle Fred into giving me. I don't know why, but I am impressed with the idea that, if you will only come, all will be well, as it used to be in the old days at Hammer, when we were all so gay, light-hearted, and so fond of each other. Wire what day to expect you.

"Yours truly,

"DOROTHEA GAYBRAITH."

"Well, that goes a little further than when Fannie asked you to run over to Baltimore, make a morning call upon her lover at his office, and find out why he

had not written, or when Gladys asked you to work your way into the confidence of Jen and discover if she was engaged to James Warren," says Mrs. Guthrie in disgust. "Does she expect you to throw the young woman over the bluff; find, *à la* sensational novel, a letter written by her to the man she really loves, saying that as soon as Dev makes his will in her favor, she will murder him and marry said love, or what?"

But the reference, at the end of the letter, to the old days when they were so fond of her, has touched Viva. She thinks lovingly of the many pleasant holidays spent at Riverside, and has a desire to see it again.

"I think I'll go for a few days, Marie. Of course, I would not be so wildly extravagant if I did not have the pass. I will return the night before our famous dinner and reunion at Harvey's. I could not think of letting you be such a belle as to have Jeff, Charlie and Will all to yourself at one time."

"Well, so you have those precious gowns fitted before you go I do not care. Now fly! I give you thirty minutes to consume your toast and coffee, which I fear is getting cold, and to be ready," and she gathers up her papers and departs.

Several days later Viva arrives at the station nearest Riverside. The smile dies away on her lips as she steps out on the deserted little platform.

"Is the carriage from Riverside here?" she asks the old express agent.

"Waal, no, I can't say as it is."

"That is strange. Can you get me a cab or anything to take me there?"

"I guess not. The village is a good bit off. But if

yer don't mind waitin' till I git my express 'tended to, I ken take yer in my wagon—it won't be very fur out of my way—that is, if yer don't mind ridin' in sich a rig."

"Thank you very much. I will be very glad to have you take me. There must be some mistake. I telegraphed Miss Gaybraith that I would come by this train, but I suppose she did not receive the message."

The old man takes twice as long as usual about his duties, for he insists upon keeping up an animated conversation, on his part at least, with Viva. But at last they are off. She wins his heart entirely by her seeming interest in "craps," and why Farmer Hodge "don't seem to have no luck with his corn."

Hopkins opens the door for her at Riverside.

"The ladies have gone to a charity fair at the Oaks," he says. "Mr. Gaybraith is in the library. Will Miss Van Velssler have tea there or go to her room at once?"

Miss Van Velssler decides to have tea in the library. She finds Dev in the depths of a huge armchair, with a startling pile of newspapers on one side of him, and a tea table on the other.

"How do you do?" he manages to say, as soon as his first surprise is over, making a path through his papers and going toward her. "How did you happen to come by this train? And what a set of heathens you must think us."

"I wired Dot I'd be here to-day, and she knows that I know the inconveniences of the late train, so I do not see how she could have expected me at any other time than this."

"Oh, I thought you stated clearly that you would come on the later train," looking at her curiously.

"What a confounded shame," he thinks. "Because Dot wanted to see Cravens at this fair, she took the only horses that could be used to-day, and left her to get here the best way she could." Aloud he says, "Perhaps you are not aware of the fact, but there is no longer a Dot in this establishment. It is Miss Dorothea Gaybraith who brightens the home of her ancestors. Will you remove your coat and gloves and permit me to serve you with tea?"

Viva leans back in a comfortable chair which he has placed for her, and sips the hot fragrant tea. She observes, after the first animation, produced on meeting her, has died out of his face, how old he looks. There are lines about his eyes and mouth which show the most reckless dissipation. It is pitiable in one so young. There is a languor, a lassitude about every movement, and every now and then he unconsciously sighs. He makes an effort to amuse her, tells her bits of gossip about the people of the surrounding country, and asks after people he knows she is corresponding with, but she can see he is scarcely interested.

"It is time they were returning," he says, glancing at the clock. "Ah, I thought I heard wheels on the drive a moment ago," as the clatter of high heels is heard on the hardwood floor of the hall.

The door is thrown open and Miss Gaybraith enters, followed by a tall, heavy young woman, with vivid color, sharp, flashing eyes, high forehead, over which falls a massive fringe. She is what a slangy clubman said of her—blousey looking.

"The *fiancée*," thinks Viva, as she goes toward Dot. "How do you do, little one? And what do you mean

by not meeting me? I owe my arrival to the kindness of old Peters."

"So sorry, dear, but as you did not say, I thought you might come by the other train, and we had promised to go to the fair, and—oh, I never could make explanations," says Dot, flinging herself into a chair and restlessly taking off her gloves.

"Humph, Cravens elusive again," thinks Dev.

Viva looks at her in surprise. Can only two seasons have brought this change in her? She was always delicate, but now she looks almost an invalid. Those dark circles around her eyes, and the brilliant glitter that is in them, add ten years to her age. Her restless little body is never still a moment. Her voice is higher and sharper. She seems aware that Viva is noticing the change in her, and resents it.

"Permit me, Miss Van Velssler," says Dev, who has watched the meeting with a look that is half bored, half amused; "my sister in the delight of seeing you has forgotten to introduce you to Miss Higgins," turning to where the huge young woman is standing, half embarrassed, wholly defiant.

Viva smiles at her very sweetly, but Miss Higgins is not pleased with the cosy *tête-à-tête* in which she found her liege lord and Viva, and openly shows it.

At the dinner table, an hour later, they depend upon Dev and Viva to keep up the conversation. Mrs. Gaybraith does not appear, having gone to her room with a headache. Dot makes no attempt to be amusing, and Miss Higgins is still disposed to frown upon the world in general. She feels that she is expected to appear at her best before this new guest, and is painfully aware

that she is far from living up to their expectations of her, and is consequently embarrassed, but, as she is fully determined not to look so, the effect is aggressive, to say the least. She mixes her wine glasses; makes wrong use of her fish fork, and at the end of the meat course, leaves her knife and fork in such a position as to signify she has not finished the course. In despair the butler hands her everything his fertile brain can suggest, and Dev has to signal him to remove the plate before the dinner can progress. It all goes, as she becomes vaguely aware of her mistakes, to make her hate Viva with an undying hatred. Dev leaves the dining-room with them. The following hour in the drawing-room passes off better. Viva takes possession of the piano, and Dev calls for one piece after the other, to prevent conversation. At last Dot says:

"You must be tired, Viva. Go up to your room, and I'll don my dressing gown and join you as soon as possible."

Viva rises, says good-night to Dev and Miss Higgins, and is amused that the latter seems to settle herself for a long *tête-à-tête* and condescends to smile for the first time.

"What can he mean by it?" Viva thinks, as she lays out a morning gown, and prepares to receive Dot. "He certainly does not care for her. It is odd—very."

"Ugh, it is so cold!" says Dot, as she enters. "Why don't you light your fire? It is all ready. Mamma *will* turn off the furnace heat at this time of the year."

"I do not feel cold—in fact, it has been quite warm all day—but, if you wish, I'll put a match to the fire."

Dot draws a stool close to the fireplace, and stretches

out her tiny little hands to the blaze. She looks more like the Dot of the Hammer College days. Her loose robe hides the thinness of her little figure, and as she brushes out her soft brown hair, and it falls about her shoulders, it seems to take years off her age.

"Now, let's talk," she says.

They look at each other in silence. It is usually impossible to make conversation after such a speech. They each wait for the other to begin, then they both laugh. Viva leans over and kisses her. It seems the first time she has seen her old friend. That fashionable, bored young woman who met her was masquerading in Dot's shape.

CHAPTER XIII.

"IT is awfully good to have you here again, Viva." (She notices the familiar Van is no longer used.) "Is it only two years since you were here? And to think even then we had not left school! Heavens, it seems centuries to me! I have been dragged about so. The first season we were in town, of course; strange that you have never visited me at my Louisville home. The last part of the winter we were in lower California. The next year we were in Florida, and oh, the two summers seem ages in themselves. I wrote you from Prospect House this summer, did I not? No? Well, I intended to—I am always intending to write to you, Viva, but somehow I have grown careless about writing to every one. At Prospect House we met Mr. Cravens, Leonard Cravens—he owns a place near here, and though we have been neighbors for years, we never met but once or twice. Well, it is hardly to be wondered at, as mamma is only here for a short time in the spring and fall, and he has been abroad at college, and only came home last June. His father was an Englishman, and, in fact, it is due to them that we are so awfully English, you know, in these parts. Of course, if a marriage could be arranged between us, it would be desirable in every way, as it would join the estates, you see."

Viva leans over and stirs the fire to conceal a smile.

The idea of a marriage being "arranged" between the *fin-de-siècle* American girl and her sweetheart is amusing enough, but the word "estate" applied to two fine blue-grass farms is comical in the extreme.

"He is perfectly lovely," continues Dot. "So big, strong and splendid looking. He has the loveliest soft brown eyes, and his hair is just a trifle wavy, and oh, such color! We rarely see it in our own countrymen, and then only when they are from the extreme North. He seems to like me better than most of the girls, principally because mamma has been so nice to him, and introduced him to so many nice people, I suppose," never considering it absurd to think that he whose father helped to build up the county, and whose great wealth was partly accumulated here, owes his social position to the recognition of Mrs. Gaybraith. "I am very fond of him," she adds, a softening light breaking over her face, and turning with the old appealing gesture that vividly recalls Hammer College.

But she never once stops talking about herself long enough to ask about Viva's affairs; and Viva, never having been accustomed to confide in any one, feels it impossible now to speak of the quiet pretty wedding that is to take place at the little church on the circle at Annapolis.

"There, if I stay up any longer, I'll look a fright for the meeting of the tennis club to-morrow. I told you they meet here, did I not? I never get up for breakfast, but have some coffee and fruit sent to my room. I advise you to do the same, as the day is horribly long anyway. Mamma rarely goes to breakfast, but Dev and Sarah show up, I believe. Could anything be

worse than her appearance, except her name—Sarah Higgins! Not even softened into Sallie, though goodness knows that is bad enough. I meant to ask you about it. What would you suggest? Mamma cannot disinherit him, for he has his money in his own right.”

“I do not see that you can do anything. I fancy that you have ruined your plans by opposing him. I am sorry myself—I would never have guessed her to be the woman Dev would have selected for his wife. However, if she really cares for him, she will study to please him and make you all proud of her yet.”

“Don’t talk nonsense, Viva. She cares no more for him than you do. Her mother took a few college men to board with her, and they found out Dev had money and is a fool, and set out to capture him. The worst of it is, they succeeded.”

“Well, do not fret over it, it may come right. Only do not worry him by embarrassing her, and so causing her to do the wrong thing.”

“Good-night,” says Dot with a sigh. “Martha—you remember her, I suppose—will wait on you, and if you are insane enough to get up for breakfast, I hope you can amuse yourself with some new music you will find on the piano, and possibly you may find something to read, but Dev usually keeps the place deluged with nothing but questionable French novels,” and she draws her dressing gown about her shivering little figure and fast disappears down the hall.

Viva sits in front of the fire, while a peculiar, hard smile plays about her mouth at times. The red blaze throws becoming lights on her sun-kissed hair and fair skin. Finally, as the little clock on the mantel strikes

again, she gets up and shakes out her heavy coil of hair.

"A cheerful prospect for a whole week, certainly," she thinks. "Mrs. Gaybraith absents herself entirely; Dot changed, cross and ill, and I am to be left to the tender mercies of an engaged pair, the while being expected, by some mysterious and occult power, to bring Dev to his senses, and show him he is ruining the country by his mad, absurd persistency in marrying the woman of his choice. Poor Dev! I cannot help feeling sorry for him. If he does marry her, he will be miserable for life. He is too fastidious, too fond of what auntie would call good form, to be happy with a woman who will constantly keep him on the *qui vive* to cover her mistakes. And she, even if she honestly loves him, will grow irritable and miserable when she finds she continually mortifies him. Unequal marriages are a ghastly thing. However, it is none of my business if he chooses to marry his *laundress*," as she tries to smother the too hot fire and turns out the light.

It is the afternoon of the tennis meeting. Viva is playing singles, with Dev in the opposite court. One can see that she is not putting forth her best efforts. She lightly springs toward the balls, and returns them with an easy swing of her racquet, placing them an inch from the back line when he is at the net, and just over when he is in the back court. She is wearing a gown of plain white serge, a tiny cap to match, and even those atrocities, white tennis shoes, fail to spoil her appearance, and her well-shaped feet look exceedingly well in them. Her hair is a little blown by the wind, and escapes from the confining cap; her cheeks are

heated from the exercise and her eyes sparkle with victory.

"You must play up, or I'll beat you. Forty love," she says, as she picks up the balls with her racquet, swings them over her head and catches them as they come down. "Ready," and the ball falls in the receiving court.

Dev is stung into playing his best, and for once is roused into something like activity. He returns the ball over her head, and it falls behind her; she just reaches it by a mighty effort. For a few minutes they keep the ball in the air; the others gather around to watch. Viva is surprised and has to play her best. Finally she catches the ball at the net and smashes it. It bounces twice before he can reach it.

"Game and set," she says, throwing down her racquet, amid the applause of the spectators. "Your *alma mater* would disown you if she saw that," and she goes toward the deserted part of the balcony, where she can see the courts at better advantage.

At the opposite end of the balcony they are serving refreshments. After a few moments she sees Dev coming across the lawn toward her, and with, she readily determines, Mr. Cravens.

"Miss Van Velssler, Mr. Cravens wishes to be presented," says Dev, and leaves them, to see after his other guests.

"I want to congratulate you on your awfully fine game of tennis," says Mr. Cravens, taking the seat opposite her. "I never saw a lady play the back-court game you do. Who taught you?"

"I have always played tennis, but my serve, where

I win most of my points, was taught me by a naval cadet friend. We used to visit here together during my school days."

"Ah, you have visited here often? I regret I know so little about my neighbors and their friends. My father, you know, was an Englishman, a younger son—oh, of only a baronet and a very new one: the title was just created three generations ago. After he married my mother (who was a kinswoman) he lived in America, because she wished it. When she died, he returned to England. He wanted me to go to college there. I am not sorry, of course, I carried out his wishes, but I am sorry I know so little about my own country. What a duffer you must think me to bore you with my whole family history at sight," he breaks off in confusion, mingled with amusement.

There is a boyish confidence, together with a manly dignity, about him, that is pleasing in the extreme.

"No, you are not boring me," leaning forward, preparing for an animated discussion. "Do you know I think the popular idea about Englishmen being uncommunicative is wrong? I think they rarely betray their inmost feelings, or show emotion of any kind, but if an Englishman wants to know you, he tells you all about himself. In the same case an American would first want to know about you, what 'your father does,' which means what business he is in, and so on. Then if you are a desirable acquaintance he tells you of himself; if not, he goes in search of some one who is."

"Is that so?" he laughs. "Well, I have not been at home long enough to detect those differences. Perhaps I am slow—like my English ancestry."

There is a frankness about him, a willingness to confess his faults, which is not the usual affectation of such confessions, born of egotism. He seems composed of the most admirable characteristics of the two countries which he may rightfully claim, without the snobbishness of either, and of the two evils, the lesser, perhaps, is the English snob—because he is not imitative, at least, and is less ignorant.

“Will you play a game of tennis? I see the near court is vacant,” he asks.

“I am just a little bit tired. I have not played for some time and am unaccustomed to the exercise. I have been with Mrs. Guthrie, in Washington, for the last two years, and they play very little there. We used to go to the marine barracks (Mrs. Guthrie’s husband is a naval officer) for a game occasionally, but even gave that up after a time.”

“That last game of yours was a stunner. By the way, ought you to sit in this breeze, without a wrap of some kind, after such exercise? Will you tell me where to get one for you?”

“It is very good of you, I’m sure. I had not thought of it, but believe I would better take your advice. If you will look at my gown, perhaps you can find the coat to match it in the library. Among so many, I fear you will find it a difficult matter, though.”

“I’ll try,” he says, and lightly springs up the steps to the main balcony and disappears through the library window.

In a moment he comes back triumphant.

“There were two almost alike, but I guessed this to be yours, for it has a faint odor of violets about it—you

are wearing a bunch of violets at your belt, and I fancied they might be favorites of yours."

"You have missed your vocation. You would have made a fine detective," she laughingly says, as she stands up to let him put her coat on her.

Dot has just come from the other end of the balcony, and plainly has heard the last two remarks. She looks from one to the other quickly, and her voice has a fretful tone as she says:

"Viva, they are looking for you to take a racquet in the court by the fountain. Hurry up; they are waiting."

"I am sorry, dear, but I have just refused to play with Mr. Cravens. I am a little tired."

"Tired already? Why, you used to play for hours at Hammer," with an uplifting of her brows that is scarcely complimentary.

"Yes, but it is two years since those days, and I am out of practice."

"Mr. Cravens, I hope you are not too tired to help me pour tea. I need you, so will take no refusal. Come," says Dot.

"I'll be charmed, I'm sure," says Cravens, anything but charmed. "Do you need me now?" with a hesitation that ought to let him off free.

"Yes, at once."

"All right. Miss Van Velssler, when are you going to play that game of tennis with me? I will never be happy till I have beaten you."

"What a savage, ungallant speech," says Viva. "It will give me great pleasure to humiliate you before the countyside almost any morning, to punish you."

Dot is impatiently tapping her high heel against the floor; he hurriedly bows to Viva and follows his hostess.

"He is a good-natured, overgrown school-boy," thinks Viva, "and with no more thought of marriage in his head than an infant. And she is jealous of me! What an idea," and she goes into the drawing-room, seats herself at the piano, and as the low, passionate strains of one of Chopin's nocturnes falls upon the air, she draws an appreciative audience about her.

Viva finds things rather awkward for the next two days. Mr. Cravens rides over in the mornings and insists upon her playing tennis with him. For several mornings they were five games each when they were interrupted for luncheon, but at last he beat her, much to his delight. Dot, not caring for tennis, has had to sit by and watch, a state of affairs that young woman by no means relishes at any time. Moreover, Mr. Craven's "appearance with the dawn," as she terms ten o'clock, forces her to rise several hours sooner, or "be in ignorance of what goes on" (see Mrs. Gaybraith). Mr. Cravens has exhibited such a friendly liking for Viva, and shows such honest pleasure in her society, that she finds it almost impossible to cut him. After refusing very firmly to ride with him a few days ago, and showing a preference for the village doctor, he came to her very much disturbed, with his boyish face clouded, and commanded her to tell him if he had offended her, apologizing for any offence he might have committed. She could only say she was not angry with him, whereupon he asked her to go rowing with him, as a kind of truce, he said. And she did not see how she could do otherwise than go. Between Miss Higgins

and Viva there has been an armed neutrality. Miss Higgins has reluctantly admitted to herself that Dev is not more attentive to Viva than his duty to his sister's guest, and so old a friend of the family, warrants, but she does not like her nevertheless. Dev has watched it all as though he was a disinterested spectator, who did not have a part in the drama. Day before yesterday he left for Louisville, to be gone for several days.

It is nine o'clock, and Viva is in the dining-room alone. Her severely plain morning-gown of gray cashmere, with broad, turnback collar and cuffs of white, suits her admirably.

"It seems as though I am to breakfast alone, John," she says to the attending servant. "You may serve breakfast."

As she speaks, Sarah Higgins comes in. Even the sturdy John has to make an effort to conceal his surprise as he looks at her. Miss Higgins has evidently taken advantage of the absence of her *fiancé* to make a hasty toilette, to put it mildly. She is wearing an ill-fitting red wrapper, and, as Dot fretfully said afterward, "Nothing is so offensive as cheap red material made badly. One can pardon the same fit and goods in dark blue or a modest gray, but red is so aggressive any way." Her hair is in curl papers, and the gown is not fastened properly at the throat.

"I was that tuk back, when the young lady comes in, I nearly drapped my tea cloth," said John to the servants later.

She does seem ashamed when she sees Viva's complete toilet, but not a particle subdued—more on the offensive than ever, if possible. She is a young woman

who is enraged, rather than humiliated, by embarrassment.

"It 'pears like neither Mrs. Gaybraith or Miss Dorothea is coming down—will you pour the coffee, Miss Viva?" says John.

He is an old servant at Riverside, and, like most of his class who cry, "Down with the aristocracy! We are all equal in this country," he has a great, in fact, an exaggerated, admiration for the *haut ton*, and readily perceives the difference between the two girls, and shows it in the petty ways within his power, such as offering Viva the seat of honor just now, and waiting upon her first.

I once saw, in one of the leading stores in a large city, a shop girl treat a plainly dressed young woman with a great deal of insolence. The shopper was very young and rather timid, and in her plain street costume there was nothing to indicate wealth. The "saleslady" looked over her head, chewing gum, and answered "How?" to the questions, which had to be repeated before she condescended to answer. When the customer took off her glove, to feel the quality of the silk, and revealed several exquisite diamond rings, the "saleslady's" attention was marked, and she volunteered her opinion about the goods in an insinuating and confidential manner, which was a startling change; but when a friend passing addressed the young woman by a name that is familiar to all the society journals, the "saleslady's" obsequiousness knew no bounds.

Dot comes in after a few moments, and for once she is roused into vivid interest at the costume of her sister-elect. She stares at her, not maliciously, but in all

curiosity, as one would at some rare specimen. Viva tries not to look conscious of the glance bestowed on her after the scrutiny is finished.

"Ah, Viva, I am glad you are presiding, and with your usual grace, of course. I think it an awful bore. I never remember who takes cream, and how many lumps of sugar. Dev answers, 'Two lumps, no cream,' or whatever it is, as reproachfully, when I ask him, as if I had done him a personal injury," says Dot.

To their utter astonishment, the door opens and that gentleman enters.

"Where did you come from? How did you get here?" Viva and Dot both ask. Sarah tries to conceal herself behind the paper.

He takes in the situation in a glance, and in no very good humor says:

"I don't see anything very startling in my returning to my own home. I did not set any particular time, I believe, and I finished my business in time to catch the night train, so here I am. You, every one, seem as surprised as if I had dropped from the moon. Pray do not let me interfere with any of your plans, if my arrival could possibly do so."

"Don't lose your temper so early in the morning. You will find it bad for the digestion," says Dot.

Viva looks at him in silence. Perhaps her expressive eyes have a look of pity or sympathy in them, and she pours his coffee without having to ask how he takes it. Certainly he apologizes very prettily for his rudeness. Miss Higgins has not spoken at all, for once abashed by the wrath she sees in the eyes of her *fiancé*.

Mrs. Gaybraith has been pleased to accord to Mr.

Cravens the privileges of an old, old friend. He calls at all hours, and the more informal and unconventional his visits the more gracious she is. She regrets that Dev and he are so uncongenial. Mr. Cravens is devoted to sports of all kinds, and an enemy of anything in the way of study, having just managed to receive his degree at Oxford, with small credit to himself, while Dev hates all violent exercise and is quite well read. So, as an intimacy between them is an impossibility, it is only by her tact, graciousness, and success in throwing off all formality that she has managed to establish the present state of affairs. For once Mr. Cravens' advent is not hailed with delight by the fair daughter of Riverside. He comes up the balcony and taps on the window, raising it before they can do anything, if there is anything to be done.

"How do you do, lazy ones? I took the liberty of coming right up from the lawn,—awfully impudent of me, I know. I fear Mrs. Gaybraith has spoiled me, but she has promised me faithfully that if I get to be too much of a nuisance, she will send me off at double quick time."

He has reached the middle of the room. He fixes his eyes on Sarah's brown curl papers, then becomes aware of the annoyance of every one and stops short. He seems to be torn in two by a wild desire to be swallowed up by the unfriendly earth, or to possess the power of becoming invisible. He gazes at them all apologetically, but is confronted by Dev's suspiciously steadfast gaze, Dot's look of annoyance, and Miss Higgins' sullen countenance. Viva looks at him and

thinks that his expression would be very amusing, if it were not all so embarrassing.

“Er—I thought I’d come over, and see if you would honor the Oaks this afternoon,” as he finally pulls himself together. “I am giving a very small party. I thought you would like it,” with an unconscious look at Dot, which puts that young woman in a state of unparalleled delight. “We will have tea in the library and a dance, later, in the billiard room.”

“Splendid,” says Dot, and is the acme of sweetness to Viva all day.

“All right, I’ll expect you, and if you will stay till the others leave, I’ll ride home with you. It will be informal enough for habits if you prefer riding instead of driving. There will be a moon, I believe. Am off now to order some necessary articles in the village, though Mrs. Hughes, my housekeeper, is in despair for fear I will forget half of them. Awfully good of you to come, I’m sure,” and he beats a hasty retreat.

CHAPTER XIV.

AFTER breakfast Miss Higgins disappears as quickly as possible, Dot retires to cogitate on a costume for the evening, and Viva saunters to the library, followed by Dev. She stops at a table and becomes interested in some photographs. He takes a chair facing her, and when she at last looks at him, he says expectantly:

"Well?"

"If you will pardon my saying so, it is not well at all, but very bad."

He walks up and down, and savagely kicks a footstool out of his path.

"I cannot understand it," she continues. "Why you insist upon spoiling your future, is, I suppose, best known to yourself."

"Don't, Viva," he says, unconscious in his emotion that he has used her first name. "Do not quarrel or argue with me. I cannot bear much more," throwing himself into a chair again. "Be seated, please. It makes me uncomfortable to talk to a person who is standing, and I must talk to some one or I shall go mad. I do not see for the life of me how this engagement came about. I was a freshman, and of course allowed very few amusements and privileges, according to college etiquette. I had never been away from home, alone that is, very much. I boarded with her mother, who was kindness itself to me always, and waited upon me

when I was slightly ill with the attention worthy a serious case, and I was very fond of her and very grateful. Sarah had a cousin visiting her. The fellows used to walk with them in the evening just after tea, and somehow *she* always fell to my lot. The cousin was a flirt, and played the other fellows pretty well; they would tell me of the notes and messages from and meetings with her; my next door neighbor was quite desperate about her, and I thought it the swagger thing for a college man to have a sweetheart. We, being freshmen, of course, did not dare aspire to the swell set, and so met very few girls. At last, under circumstances with no great credit to myself, I proposed to Sarah."

"Ah, had been drinking too much, I suppose," thinks Viva.

"During the next year I saw my mistake, but what could I do? I had changed my quarters, and if I did not go to see her often, she wrote a note, or the mother would come to me and say I was breaking her daughter's heart. You know I have always had a horror of marrying a society girl. I have been called an awfully vain fellow, but I have had a morbid dread of being married for my money. I thought this simple country girl would not think of money, and I believe that she does care for me for myself."

She looks at him pityingly; evidently she does not think so.

"But it is an awful muddle as it is," he continues, "with mother and Dot against it. With all my faults I am not a scoundrel, and I cannot deliberately throw over the woman I have asked to be my wife, when she

tells me her life will be ruined if I do, even though I do not care for her. What must I do, Viva? Tell me."

"I refuse to take the responsibility of deciding for you. You must do that for yourself. But I will say, if you think she honestly cares for you, you are doing her, as well as yourself, a hideous injustice to marry her feeling as you do, for it is very evident that you do not love her at all."

"If I think she cares for me? Good God, do you doubt it?"

"You are very ungenerous to ask me, and I refuse to answer."

"You need not; I am answered," he says. Then abruptly, "I got this when I was in Louisville; she has always worn a simple little gold ring I happened to have on that night. Do you think she will be pleased?" handing Viva a superb diamond ring.

"I do not see how she could help but admire it, for it is exquisite. But the question is, would she be pleased if she knew the spirit in which you place it on her hand? And oh, my friend, will you be pleased, as you say, when you see it there?"

She is holding the ring lightly on the tip of her third finger. He leans forward and pushes it down against Charlie's class ring.

"It would 'please' me more where it is," he says.

"You forget yourself," and an angry flush covers her face. "You do not know what you are saying."

"Perhaps I do, only too well." He lets his hands fall to his sides, and gazes moodily out of the window.

"You will regret this to-morrow, I am sure," waiting,

woman-like, for him to apologize for what she has, perhaps, brought on herself.

"Leave me now," he says wearily, "and please do not think worse of me than you can help."

It is the evening of Mrs. Gaybraith's dance. Once a year she entertains the mob, as she terms the village people. Of course, she has invited those who usually grace her smaller and more select entertainments, but to-night there will be present people who are only honored with an invitation to Riverside once a year. Mrs. Gaybraith does not go to any elaborate preparations, nor does "the mob" expect it, but is contented to come and make merry as best it may, and put up with the village orchestra for dance music, and a supper furnished by the village confectioner. Of course, at the swell dinners, chefs and music are ordered from Louisville.

Viva is standing in the hall doorway, talking to a youth who "lives, moves and has his being" in the village post-office. In fact, she is making Mr. Galloway's life one of delight this evening, and has seen as little of Mr. Cravens as polite society permits, for he has insisted upon asking her to dance when she had no engagement, and she has been obliged to waltz with him. Miss Higgins comes up, breathless from a polka, which she has turned into a romp. She has honored Viva with a great deal of her society for the last few days—perhaps because Dev and Viva have studiously avoided each other since his visit to Louisville, and possibly because Viva has taken pains to smooth over several rough places for her and relieve her from

awkward positions. Any way her friendship, such as it is, is offered to Viva.

"Come with me, Viva, and tie my sash," dragging her down the hall. Miss Higgins is of that class of girls whose one idea of intimacy is the use of the first name.

"My mother-in-law rather cut up about my gown," continues Miss Higgins; "said it was cut too low, and pinned a lot of roses on me, to hide my neck, but I gave one to every fellow I saw, and I have danced the rest off," she gasps, her ample chest generously displayed and heaving from the exercise of the dance. Her skin is very beautiful.

"Just the style of girl to fascinate a very young and inexperienced college man," thinks Viva.

"I don't know why I let them cut up to me so far," adds Sarah. "Goodness knows there is young Spaulding who is crazy about me. I can get him any day, and he has a lot more money, if he is only a fresh."

"I see," thinks Viva. "She is what the college men term 'a college widow'—and like all the middle classes, in college towns, receives only the attentions of the freshmen, who, when they grow to be upper classmen, forget to know their humble friends who kindly whiled away the dreary plebe days."

"I tell you what," says Miss Higgins, confidentially, as Viva puts the finishing touch to the sash, "don't be surprised if you hear that it is young Spaulding after all," and she turns to her partner and they polka madly down the room.

Some one passes from behind a screen on to the balcony. Viva starts, and asks herself if it could have been

Dev. What will he do? she wonders. Before she can follow, some one calls out to her.

"By Jove, Miss Van Velssler, where do you manage to hide yourself? I have been looking everywhere for you to take you to supper. You haven't forgotten, I hope, like you did the last dance," reproachfully, "that you promised to let me go to supper with you."

"No, I have not forgotten, Mr. Cravens. Let us walk through the rooms and find Dot, and ask her to join us."

"As you wish," he says, offering her his arm.

"Oh!" she says and stops short. "There is old Mr. Wilson; I know he wants me to dance. I got out of it the first part of the evening by promising him an extra during supper. I cannot bear to dance with him."

"I should think not! The idea of the old duffer having the nerve to ask you. He always smells so of snuff! Come in here," and he hurries her into a small room off the library.

Old Mr. Wilson seems to be coming after them, and they take refuge behind the curtains of a bay window. Mr. Wilson comes in through the hall door as Dot and her mother enter from the library.

"Have you seen my pretty little partner, Mrs. Gaybraith? Miss Viva, I mean. What a figure she has! I saw her with Cravens some time ago, but I have searched all the rooms, and she is nowhere to be found."

"Indeed," says Mrs. Gaybraith rather coldly. "Perhaps if you looked on the balconies or the grounds you might find her."

"I'll try. Ha, ha! lucky dog, that Cravens. On the balconies, eh?" and the old man ambles out.

"There, I told you so!" says Mrs. Gaybraith, turning on Dot in a perfect fury. "You insisted upon having that girl here, and you see the consequences. Any one with half an eye can see that Dev is falling in love with her, and if he throws over his objectionable *fiancée*, it will be for her sake; and every one is talking about Cravens' attentions to her. She is playing him against Dev, and will take the first one who proposes."

Mr. Cravens and Viva stand transfixed. She is very pale; his color comes and goes. He shuts his hands tight, and once starts to throw open the curtains and face them, but she lays a detaining hand on his arm. What is the use of a scene? she thinks. They have unintentionally become eavesdroppers, and they must remain where they are. She pictures Dot's humiliation if she should know Mr. Cravens had heard her mother's outspoken matrimonial plans for him.

"I do not believe Viva would marry Dev," Dot waveringly asserts.

"You always were a fool, Dorothea," Mrs. Gaybraith says, emphatically. "You'll believe she'd marry Cravens when we get up some fine day, and find them eloped. That rot about her going to marry Charlie Carlyle is all thin air; you see she has not mentioned it. Oh, no, my lady prefers a husband with a bank account, if you please, to a penniless naval officer. Well, you have your own self to thank for it. It was your foolhardiness in bringing her here."

"I wish she had not come," says Dot, almost crying.

"Don't be an idiot, and cry; it will make your nose red. Go back to your guests," says Mrs. Gaybraith, sweeping out and bearing Dot in her train.

When they are gone, Viva sinks into a chair and looks at him. He cannot meet her eyes, but walks up and down the little alcove, his boyish face flushed to a deep crimson, and his clear brow knitted.

"I say, Miss Van Velssler, it is an awful shame for you to have heard this. I would not have had it happen for anything. I don't believe—er——"

"You think I am not trying to marry you or Dev? Thank you," she says, ironically.

"Don't put it like that," he says, deeply pained.

"Six weeks from yesterday I am going to marry Mr. Carlyle, the 'penniless naval officer.'"

Perhaps he grows a shade paler and his lips are a trifle unsteady under his blond mustache—or is it the light? This home-made gas always flickers so. He turns in his walk, comes up to her and takes both her hands in his.

"I am awfully sorry you told me," he says. "That is, of course, I mean I would be honored by your confidence, but I am sorry that you felt it necessary to tell me now, don't you see. By Jove, if I could punch somebody's head I'd feel better."

She looks up into his face and smiles. She is rather amused at his very English way of expressing his indignation.

"I had intended telling you to-night any way," she says.

"Had you? That is awfully good of you. You do not know how pleased I am to hear you say that! If I thought you had told me because of this, you know, I would have been awfully cut up. By the way, Miss Van Velssler, can you not use me for an usher or some-

thing? Please let me be an attendant at your wedding."

She draws her hands gently from his, and the slight trembling of her lips shows she is touched at and appreciates his genuine friendship for her.

"I should be very much pleased to have you, if there was to be anything of the kind, but there isn't. We are to be married very quietly in the presence of a few of his classmates and his cousins, Lieutenant and Mrs. Guthrie. Believe me, your friendship has been very pleasant to me. I would like to see you to say good-by to you before I leave in the morning. Now you had better take me back, perhaps."

Her next partner claims her for the dance as they enter the library, and she goes off with him. After the waltz is finished, she seats herself on a sofa in the hall, and, more to get rid of him than anything, sends him for an ice.

"There she is now," says Sarah, at the other end of the hall, and comes toward Viva, followed by Dev and several others. "We have a telegram for you," Sarah adds, all curiosity. "A boy just brought it from the village. It is marked 'rush,' so we came at once to find you. Not bad news, I hope."

"Thank you," says Viva, carelessly taking it, "if you had lived with Mrs. Guthrie as long as I have, your nerves would have become hardened to telegrams. She just revels in them. This is probably from her, to say what the morning papers would tell me, that her husband's ship has arrived, or that Madame Elise cannot match the silk for my new gown. Where can Mr.

Galloway have gone to with that ice I sent him for, I wonder?"

They see that she is not going to gratify their curiosity, so take themselves back to the dance.

"Whatever it is, I'll make it an excuse to depart tomorrow," thinks Viva, as she tears open the envelope.

How often those words recur to her and make her writhe in agony! She reads:

"Charlie drowned at Old Point last night. Buried at Annapolis Friday afternoon. Send you letters and further details by mail to Washington address.

"WILLIAM HARRIS."

She tries to move, to cry out, but she is powerless to do either. The shock is so sudden, so terrible, that her brain seems numbed. She can only gaze vacantly at the dancers. One or two people pass and speak to her, but she can form no reply. She still holds the telegram in her hand. Mr. Cravens passes through the hall, and, seeing her, stops.

"Have you seen—good heavens, what is the matter?" noticing for the first time her expression. "I heard you had received a telegram; it must have contained bad news. Can I do anything for you? You look ill. Let me get you a glass of wine."

She shakes her head. He sits down beside her and gently unfastens her fan from her side and fans her. He does not like to leave her, so calls a waiter to bring a glass of wine. He considerately and dexterously shields her face with the fan when any one passes. He takes the wine from the waiter and tells her to drink it. It is pitiful to see the childlike way she obeys him in

everything. She seems to have no will of her own. Her hands lie passive in her lap.

"Possibly you had better go upstairs," he says.

She silently gets up and permits him to lead her to the first landing. "Are you going to-morrow?" She nods her head.

"I wish I could do something to help you. I am sure you would call upon me, if I could," he says, pressing her cold hand in his. "I'll come over in the morning and take you to the train. Good-night," as he puts her fan in her hand, and gives her the telegram, which she had dropped. He fancies she might not want its contents known.

She thinks that she will be gone when he comes in the morning. He will never dream of her going on the very early train, but what does it matter?—nothing matters.

"Will you go with Miss Van Velssler to her room? She is ill, and I think needs your care," he says to a maid who is passing.

It is Martha. She has to lead Viva to her room.

"Help me to pack, Martha; I must leave on the first train—you will please tell Hopkins."

She permits Martha to undress her, but objects to having a dressing gown put on.

"My travelling gown," she says.

"But, Miss Viva, it's only a little after twelve o'clock, and your train goes at six; surely you want to rest first."

She shakes her head and reaches for the travelling gown; then sits on a sofa and watches Martha. She thinks of the last time Martha helped her to pack—her

wedding day. And she had taken off the little clay-stained slippers he wanted, and sent them to his room. He was so gay, so bright, the life of the house, surely he can not be—Oh, she must have read the telegram wrong; why had she not thought of that? She rushes to the bureau and tumbles things over to find it. She feverishly tosses everything in her way on the floor. She reads it again. How horrible the words look on the hideous yellow paper. She tries to remember them, but somehow the sentences always get mixed up and she has to refer to the paper over and over again. At last everything is packed. Martha puts a stool at her feet and lingers, loath to leave her, she looks so strange.

“Do you want me to stay with you, Miss Viva?”

“No, you are very kind, but I prefer to be alone.”

With a last touch to the room, Martha goes. And as soon as the door closes Viva puts out the gas, throws up the curtains and waits for the dawn. How strange it is! she thinks; but she is only cold and still, and seems to be choking. If she only could cry!

She arrives at the station much too soon the next morning, having urged Hopkins to drive faster all the way. Old Peters comes to help her out of the cart.

“Going away, Miss? Ye’re early—train don’t come for mor’n half an hour. Want a ticket to Annapolis? Waal, I kin only accommodate you as fur as Washington. Annapolis, that is where the young gentlemen is. Will yer give my regards to Mr. Charlie, if it wouldn’t be presumin’?”

She shrinks from him. To save her life she cannot tell him. She cannot force herself to say the word *dead*. She at last reaches the junction and boards the

through train. Will she be in time? she repeats over and over to herself. In the sleeper, she hears some people talking of the accident. She thinks she will go mad, if they keep it up. She rings the bell for the train-boy to bring her the Louisville papers, and reads:

“DROWNED IN HARBOR AT OLD POINT!”

“A YOUNG NAVAL OFFICER LOSES HIS LIFE IN
SIGHT OF HIS SHIP.

“Last evening Cadets William Harris and Charles Carlyle, of the U. S. S. *Atlanta*, one of the White Squadron, went ashore at seven o'clock, spending the evening at the Hygeia Hotel. Owing to some mistake, when they reached the pier they found the officers' boat gone, and had to secure a small sailboat to take them to their ship. The boatman was probably careless, and they were capsized. The evening being very cool, the cadets had on their topcoats. Cadet Carlyle had the pockets of his filled with purchases for his classmates, and was weighted down, and, although he was an expert swimmer, he never rose. The body was recovered two hours later. Cadet Harris was saved with assistance from the ship. Boatman, unknown, was also drowned. The cadets had just been ordered to Annapolis for final examination. The sad part of the affair is Cadet Carlyle's engagement to a Washington belle, which had just been announced. He will be buried on Friday at two o'clock at the Government Cemetery at Annapolis.”

The paper falls from her hand, and she looks out at the flying landscape. How silly those sheep look jumping about so! What a sickly green the trees are! Why is it that babies seem to be so in the majority on

sleepers, and, notwithstanding the time that they and their nurses spend in the dressing-room, they are always so depressingly dirty? Why will their mothers let them journey so continually to the water-cooler, and fall into every section in passing, and put their sticky hands on one's pillows?

"That was quite a sad affair about young Carlyle," says an old man opposite.

"Yes," says a man in checked trousers, who has spent the morning telling of "when I was in the Rockies," or "when I was such a place," feeling himself an American Stanley, no doubt. "Do you know," continues the all-important, travelled youth, "I have noticed those topcoats the navy men wear, and wondered what they would do if they fell overboard with one on, they are so heavy, so long and so tight."

A wonder he does not suggest to the department to have the coats lined with life-preservers!

"The brass buttons help to make them heavy too, I suppose," says the old man.

"Do the past midshipmen, as they used to say—I believe they have done away with that rank now—have brass buttons on their coats, or wear the regulation officers' coat?" asks a man in the same section. "They 'rate,' as they say, both as cadets and officers, and it seems to me that they are neither 'fresh fish nor good salt herring.' The paper speaks of them once as officers and afterward as cadets."

"I suspect," says the checked-trousers youth, "they forgot to leave their conceit on shore, and that capsized the boat."

A laugh goes up at this witticism—it is altogether

from what point we view a situation whether it assumes a tragical or a comical aspect.

Viva raises her window and leans out to get away from the chatter about her. It is raining very hard when she reaches Washington. There is another change before she arrives at Annapolis, but it is quieter and the cars are less crowded. The banging of the trunks, the turmoil at the station almost drive her mad. At last she is there.

"To the Academy," she says, entering a cab.

She does not seem to notice the rain; she has left her umbrella in one of the cars. She pays the cabman and forgets to tell him to wait. She passes the guard-house and the monument, and goes down the row of officers' houses to the little chapel. A marine is on duty, with his musket at "carry."

"Cadet Carlyle?" she asks. "Am I in time?"

"Yes, Miss, in the chapel," stopping a moment respectfully in his walk. "A relative, I suppose, poor thing," he thinks. "I wonder why some of the officers didn't meet her."

In the chapel she sees one of his classmates; she recognizes the uniform. He looks at her white face and retires to a window, with his back to her. She goes up to the coffin. How white he is! she has never seen him so still before. They have put on his full dress uniform. His hair is combed so straight! She pushes one curl across his forehead, as it used to fall sometimes in spite of "the regulation cut." How strange it is he does not look at her, speak to her or take her in his arms! The marriage can never be announced now; his father will not live long and he must

not think badly of the son he loved so well. Of course that was what Will meant by saying he had sent her letters—the officers had not had time to go through his papers; but Will suspected the contents of her letters and sent them before they could be read. She takes off his class ring; his hands looked so peaceful that she cannot disturb them, so she drops it into the coffin. It falls noiselessly against the white satin cushion. One last lingering look and she turns away. The cadet comes toward her.

“Can I be of any service to you, madame?” he says, raising his cap.

She has reached the door.

“If you would kindly direct me to the gate—I—seem to have forgotten the way,” pressing her hands to her head.

“Ridley, take this lady to the gate,” he calls to a cadet who is passing. “A friend of Carlyle’s—see if you can do anything for her,” he adds *sotto voce*.

The cadet just addressed is so muffled up in his “rain clothes” that it would be hard to recognize him. He turns up the rim of his hat, so she can see his face, and walks beside her. He looks at her curiously and says something to her which she does not hear.

“My carriage is gone,” she says plaintively, “I left it here.”

“Go into the guardhouse, out of the rain, and I’ll see if I can get one for you.”

After a few moments, he does manage it and comes for and places her in the carriage.

“Where shall I tell him to drive?”

“To the depot.”

"Can I be of any service to you? Go with you, or assist you in getting your ticket?"

She looks too ill to be alone; she is a woman and in distress, and the friend, or something, of his dead class-mate—all the chivalry of his nature is brought to the surface. He wonders what he must do if she faints.

"You are very good, but I do not require anything," leaning back and closing her eyes.

Then there is nothing to be done but to give the order to the cabman, lift his rubber hat respectfully and stand aside for the carriage to turn off.

There is a wait of three hours at the dilapidated little station. She walks up and down the platform; it is fortunately sheltered from the weather. She pictures to herself the solemn funeral procession on its way to the Government grounds. It is too bad it is such a rainy day—he was so fond of sunshine. If only the sun had shone to-day! Across the little river faintly sounds taps. She strains every nerve to hear. She knows they are lowering the coffin. The bugle notes of the weird refrain fall like a blow on her ear.

"Love, good-night ; love, good-night.

Must you go ? Must you go ?

When I need you so !"

the bugle mournfully sounds, dying away into a wail.

Taps have sounded for that brave young officer for the last time. He has put out his lights for alway. Nothing will disturb his rest. He will sleep on till that last morn when the angel trumpeter sounds reveille.

CHAPTER XV.

SHE never knows how she reaches Washington. She gets out at the little station to change cars, with a kind of instinct. Once more in Washington, she goes to her hotel. As she passes down the corridor to her room, she hears a young woman in the next room, playing the mandolin she borrowed before Dot's letter came. How she hates the sound of the tinkling thing! She will give it to the girl, as she seems to like it. She herself will never touch it again. Marie springs forward to meet her as she opens the door.

"Viva, darling!" taking her in her arms.

"I have seen him," she says simply.

"I have been so uneasy about you, dear," mercifully refraining from asking her any questions. "Come into my room, by the fire, and let me take these wet clothes off you. I telegraphed to Riverside when I first heard, but they said you had gone; had bought a ticket for Washington. I went to the afternoon train to meet you, but as you did not come I feared you had missed connection, so wired again. A Mr. Cravens there has been very good in wiring me all the information in his power, and Dev offered to come. I never thought of your going there alone, dear—I would so gladly have gone with you. Jeff is there."

"I know you would, but I feared to be delayed a

moment. I fancy I could not think very clearly about anything," she says tiredly.

"Poor little thing," kissing her. "You are worn out. I had everything in your room ready in case you came," touching a match to the fire arranged in the grate.

Marie has carefully put out of sight everything that will remind her too painfully of Charlie. The simple trousseau has been packed away, and the box of announcement cards to be sent out after the wedding has been removed from her desk. Viva goes up to her toilet table and sees a package addressed to herself. She listlessly turns it over; she has seen that writing surely; she mechanically opens it. It is her letters and the little soiled slippers Will has returned. There is a long letter from him on top, but she scarcely notices it—she will appreciate that later. It tells her principally what the papers did, only more sympathetically. She has borne the strain as long as possible; she breaks down utterly now.

"How could I have been so stupid as not to guess what that was?" thinks Marie, as she leads her toward the bed and tucks her in as lovingly as a mother would her child. Then she lowers the shades, kisses her, and mercifully leaves her alone with her grief.

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It is two weeks later. Viva sits in Marie's room, by the fire, with her feet on the fender. She is always cold lately. For the first few days after Charlie's death the papers were full of it. They did not spare her at all. One paper, a little more progressive than the rest, had her picture in—not that it was at all like her—and

in a gown she never saw, but that was, of course, a minor detail. She was described as of half a dozen different types. The navy women asked each other who she was, and a few, who had sons in the class or at the Naval Academy, went so far as to leave cards; then they forgot her in the discussion of the final army and navy reception at the White House. If Marie had fears of there being any violent outbursts of grief, they were never realized. After that first day she never gave way, but sat forever quietly before the fire, with her hands folded calmly in her lap, and her lids drooped pathetically over her eyes. They had had to discuss ways and means; Viva had insisted upon securing a position as teacher or companion, and Marie had equally insisted that nothing of the kind must be thought of yet anyway, but that Viva must remain her guest for an indefinite period. Viva would not consent, and after all, perhaps it was best, thought Marie, to let her go among strangers and have new duties to perform—anything to wake her out of this apathy into which she has fallen.

“I wonder what she would say, if she knew I was his wife?” Viva had thought several times.

Marie had noticed that the class ring was gone, but thought she had lost it, and to be reminded of it would pain her, so she delicately refrained from mentioning it.

“Viva, listen to this,” says Marie, entering with *The Evening Star* in her hand, “since you are determined on that mad scheme of yours:

“‘WANTED.—A companion for a young invalid lady. Must be good reader and musical. To go out of the

city. Apply at once. Best references required. Henry Henderson, Arlington Hotel.'

"What do you think of that?"

"It sounds very well; and as Jeff is ordered to the Pacific slope, Washington will be dull without you. I think I would prefer going away."

"Very well, I'll write at once to Mr. Henry Henderson (I do not like the name, it sounds too jingling) and tell him that we will receive him this evening."

A slow smile flits over Viva's face at Marie's way of expressing herself.

"He might say that he will receive us this evening," she says.

"Not a bit of it! Nothing like putting a high value on one's self," says Marie, as she scribbles a little perfumed note and dispatches it by a bell boy.

After dinner, Marie puts her little sitting-room in order and watches the clock rather impatiently; she is full of curiosity to know if he will come and what he will be like. At eight o'clock a bellboy knocks at the door and hands her a card. "Henry Henderson," she reads, and in one corner is "Att'y at Law."

"Show the gentleman up here," she says to the boy. "So he is a lawyer," still looking at the card, as though she could gain some further information from that.

In a few moments the door is thrown open and the boy announces Mr. Henderson. Marie goes toward him.

"Mr. Henderson," she says, bowing her pretty head, "Mrs. Guthrie, and this is Miss Van Velssler, in whose name I answered your advertisement this afternoon. Will you be seated, please?"

She quickly decides he is rather handsome—medium height; possibly a little too heavy; dark hair; gray eyes that are very roving and restless and cannot look into one's own without a hard look coming into them that hides whatever emotion he may feel, like a mask; he does not seem to know what to do with his hands and feet, and yet, withal, there is a certain consequential air about him. He is an odd mixture of audacity and embarrassment. There is a droop about his mouth that indicates brutality and cruelty, and the wavering expression in the eyes stamps him as cowardly. Yet there is something about him that shows a great desire to please. Marie sums it all up quickly.

“Very easy to manage, if one takes a high hand, and the redeeming quality is generosity,” is her mental decision.

He seems scarcely to know how to begin. Marie has gently to suggest to him the business that is before them.

“You said you wanted a companion,” she begins, after a few comments on the weather, the damage of the storm of last night, *et cætera*. “Will you tell us for whom you wish one, and what her duties will be?”

He glances uneasily at Viva a second, hesitates, then says:

“For my wife. She is almost an invalid, though I never say so before her, and—er—her education has been interrupted; that is, it has not been finished in the regulation way, at college, on account of her health, and I wish some one who will direct her reading—help her with her music and amuse her, don't you see?”

“I am perhaps capable of assisting her with English,

French, and German classics, and I play on several instruments, but I fear I am not proficient enough in Greek and Latin," says Viva.

An odd smile crosses his face. Viva thinks it is because she speaks so confidently of her accomplishments, and she becomes very flushed.

"I fancy my wife will not want to study Greek and Latin," he says.

Again the arrangements seem to hang fire. Viva looks at him with a slight degree of curiosity and Marie expectantly.

"In regard to references," says Marie, seeing she must continue, "my husband is Lieutenant Guthrie of the United States Navy. Miss Van Velssler is a connection of ours, and Congressman Atkins of South Carolina is her godfather."

"Yes," he says absently, looking at Viva. "These are mine," handing Marie some cards. "I would be very much pleased if you will accept the position, Miss Van Velssler. We would try to make your stay with us pleasant," with a smile that does away with the previous impression of him and makes him look very likable indeed.

"You forget you have not told us where you live and what time you would like her to enter upon her duties," says Marie.

"To be sure. I am unaccustomed to doing business with ladies, which will account for my awkwardness. I live in Louisville, and I would like her to come at once. And in regard to salary," he mentions a sum that surprises Viva very much, and makes Marie want to apologize to him for thinking anything uncompli-

mentary about him. "This is Tuesday," he continues, "and I leave for my home Thursday morning."

"Do you mean that you want me to be ready to go with you then?" says Viva, for the first time asking a question.

He looks embarrassed, glances about, but as she is waiting, he is forced to answer.

"Well,—er—that might hurry you too much, and I may have to leave to-morrow night, which you would find inconvenient, I know. Suppose we say you come Friday? My carriage will meet you, and, in case there should be a mistake and the coachman miss you, this is the address," laying a card on the table.

"As you prefer," says Viva, perhaps a trifle haughtily.

He seems inclined to linger, but they do not ask him to stay, so he rises, bids them adieu and departs. There is silence for some time after he is gone. Then Marie can stand it no longer.

"Well?" she asks.

"He seems to object to travelling with his wife's companion," says Viva scornfully.

"No," hesitatingly, "that was not it, I am sure. To my mind he would rather have liked it. But there was some reason why he is to go on one train and you the next! Viva, don't go," kneeling down beside her chair and putting her arms about her. "I think you will not be happy there—somehow I cannot like him."

"Nonsense! I do not see anything objectionable in him, except the way he has of not looking at one when he speaks, and gazing so uncomfortably hard when he thinks one is not looking. But as I am not to be *his* companion, his manners will not affect me. His refer-

ences are excellent," taking up the cards, "and the salary is better than one could expect, to say nothing of the duties of a companion not being as tedious as those of a teacher."

"Yes," says Marie, getting up with a sigh, "I suppose you are right."

The parting between Marie and Viva is very sad and very deeply felt. It is like saying good-by to the brightest part of her life to Viva; she knows there is a very long, unlovely road before her, and that the battle will be a hard one, and will not be ended till life itself is ended. She has packed up the pretty odds and ends of *bric-à-brac* that Charlie sent her from abroad, and leaves them with Marie, to store with her things. "I will probably never be situated so that I can call for them, dear; if so, keep them as a remembrance of the pleasant times we have had together."

It was very hard bidding adieu to the little apartment where she has been so happy, but it is over now, the parting, and she does not like to think of it. In a few minutes she will enter upon a new life—what will it be like?

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The carriage stops in front of a very handsome brown stone house on Third Avenue. A servant in dark blue livery opens the door.

"You are the young" (he intended to say person, but there is something about her that restrains him, and he says instead) "lady that Mrs. Henderson is expecting, I suppose. I'll have one of the maids show you up to your room." Viva follows the girl upstairs. The room she is shown into on the second floor, at the back

of the house, is a very pleasant one, and overlooks the long garden, which is, like the grounds of most Louisville houses, at the back of the house. She watches them unstrap her trunk, then lays out her combs, brushes and toilet bottles, arranges her writing desk, and sits down, waiting to be sent for. When one first occupies new apartments there seems to be nothing to do. It is too new to rest pleasantly and let old memories rise, but one waits impatiently for the next features in one's existence to develop themselves. She has not written to any one since Charlie died; she received a great many notes of condolence, of course, principally from his classmates and her own. Dot wrote very sweetly—almost every word seemed a passionate and hidden apology for the wrong she had done her and which she believed Viva still ignorant of; but she could not bring herself to answer any of them, and had asked Marie to do so for her, Will's being the only letter she wrote herself.

It grows very late, and they have not sent for her. Perhaps she was supposed to come down when that bell rang—no doubt it was the dinner bell. She smooths her hair and goes into the corridor. She sees Mr. Henderson standing at the head of the steps.

"How do you do, Miss Van Velssler?" he says, offering her his hand. "Hope you had a pleasant trip."

"Very pleasant, thank you. I waited in my room expecting to be told when I was to see Mrs. Henderson, but I supposed that was the dinner bell and thought perhaps she would expect me to go down."

His ease of manner seems to vanish.

"It was the dinner bell, but my wife generally takes

her meals in her sitting-room—er—you are to come to dinner with me, if you don't mind," he adds, leading the way.

She notices that the small table is not laid for two, and she feels like annihilating herself for not staying in her room. They are very quiet through dinner; Mr. Henderson seems rather to hurry through it, and rises gladly when it is over.

"Now, if you please, I will introduce you to my wife."

Viva follows him, and he stops at a door in a quaint little corridor off the main hall and taps lightly before entering.

"Is it you, Henry?" says a fretful voice. "I thought I would have to go to bed before you came, you were so long. This is one of my bad days, and you know how much worse it makes me to be kept waiting."

"I know, dear, and I am very sorry, but it was unavoidable," leaning over the sofa, and hiding Viva from view.

In fact, it is a few seconds before he seems to remember her, and she has time to take a survey of the hot, crowded little room. Its color is blue; everything is blue; there is not even another tone to rest the tired eye. The hangings, walls, carpet, covers, and cushions, all are blue. The mistress of the apartment is lying at full length on the sofa in a morning-gown of blue nun's-veiling.

"I would grow to hate this sickly shade, if I had to stay in this room long," thinks Viva.

"Dear, this is Miss Van Velssler. I hope you will be better now that she has come," says Mr. Henderson, at last, becoming aware that Viva is waiting.

She comes up to the sofa as he speaks.

"I do not think anything will make me better," says the lady of the blue room, crossly.

"At least, I hope I will be able to make you pass the time more pleasantly," says Viva. "You are fond of music, I believe. I usually manage to interest people who are—I am so fond of music myself."

"I don't care for music at all, only Henry is so anxious to have me learn."

"I am only anxious to keep you as you are, dear. But I thought you would find it pleasant if you could become interested in music," says Mr. Henderson.

A smile like that of a spoiled, gratified child passes over her face. Viva is puzzled and fears to venture another remark. She looks at the shrunken figure on the sofa, and wonders how a man of Mr. Henderson's type could have cared for her. They seem entirely unsuited to each other: *she* seems in ignorance of the fact, but he is painfully conscious of it. He does not look like a man to have such patience and forbearance as his words to his wife suggest, yet why should he assume to have, if such is not the case? She cannot understand it. Mrs. Henderson must be nearly as tall as her husband. The color seems to have faded from her eyes and hair, they are a neutral tint, and her skin is very clear, though she is exceedingly pale.

"Will you be seated, Miss Van Velssler?" Mr. Henderson says.

Viva notices that there is a shade of difference in his tone to her before his wife. He is, perhaps, all that courtesy requires—certainly as polite as necessary to his wife's companion; but there was a tone of deference in his manner in Washington, and when she met him this

evening that is missing now. She thinks he strives to soften and modulate his voice when speaking to his wife, and to harden it when addressing any one else, for he uses the same hard tone in speaking to the house-keeper, who comes for orders. And certainly one of the few grudging compliments Marie paid him was upon the low and sweet qualities of his voice.

"I hope you don't wear black, Miss Van Velssler?" is the first remark Mrs. Henderson condescends to address to her.

Viva had not bought mourning at Charlie's death—Marie would not allow it. "It is all nonsense for you to go to that expense," said she briskly, "when you talk of making your own living. It is a barbarous custom, any way; it does not make us grieve any more sincerely for our dear ones, but has a depressing effect upon the spirits and is injurious to the general health." So she had allowed herself to be guided in this by Marie. Not that she cared—what difference did a few furbelows of crape signify on one's gown? she thought wearily. But she had a black dress and had got in the habit of wearing it, because she had grown not to care what she wore. She sees that Mrs. Henderson is waiting for her to reply.

"I do not wear mourning, if that is what you mean; I do wear black very often," she says.

"Well, I do not care, if I know it is not mourning."

"My darling can bear nothing that is not bright about her," says Mr. Henderson, bending over his wife in a manner that would have made Beau Brummel mad with envy.

Viva leans back in her chair sick and faint. To

have her wounds torn open by such a ruthless hand is almost more than she can bear. How hot the room is!

"You are tired, Molly, love, I fear," says Mr. Henderson. "Shall I ring for your maid and carry you to your room?"

Viva rises at once.

"Then I will say good-night to you," she says. "I hope you will have a restful night. What time shall I come to you in the morning?"

"I always take my breakfast in bed; but you can—ah, Henry, what time do you breakfast?"

"Very early," says that gentleman, uncompromisingly.

"Well, you can breakfast at any time you ring," finishes Mrs. Henderson, and looking down to conceal her evident delight that he does not wish to take breakfast with Viva.

"You will send for me, then, when you are ready? Good-night," says Viva as she leaves the room.

It is very late when she wakes the next morning; she is surprised at herself. She makes a hurried toilet and goes down to the dining-room.

"Is Mrs. Henderson up?" she asks the servant.

"She has not sent for her maid yet."

Then there is no hurry, after all. The dining-room is one of the prettiest in the house; it opens on a wide balcony, shut in by stained-glass windows, in which are arranged potted plants. In the corners of the balcony there are tall palms; it is, in fact, a sort of impromptu conservatory. A hammock swings invitingly at one end, and there are large luxurious chairs scattered about. Viva goes through the French window after

she has breakfast, and saunters toward the hammock. There is something so refreshing about geraniums, she thinks, as she piles up the cushions and lazily swings to and fro, inhaling the perfume of the flowers; they are not too sweet, like tuberoses, or too spicy, like chrysanthemums, but just delightful. The sun, shining through the red window, makes her skin look very transparent and her hair as if it be on fire. She clasps her hands behind her head and closes her eyes. It is the first moment she has been at peace since that awful night at Riverside. If they would never send for her, only let her swing idly on forever in the sweet, fragrant morning sunshine! Mr. Henderson stands in the door of his study, which also opens on the balcony, and watches her with undisguised admiration. He hates to spoil the picture, but finally goes toward her.

"Pray do not let me disturb you," as she attempts to rise. "Please remain as you are."

She sinks back, preferring her present position to the struggle of rising. Hammocks are very pleasant when one is once in them, she remembers, but getting in and out of them plays havoc with one's dignity. He is looking at her very hard, and she is angry with herself when she feels a flush creep over her face, at which he is intensely amused. She begins to speak of his wife, to attract his attention from herself, and it is her turn to be amused at the magic effect the subject produces upon him.

"Ah, yes," he says, "I came to speak to you about Mrs. Henderson. To be quite candid with you, she will see a great deal more of society in the future, as I intend to enter politics, and my wife must entertain my

friends—as much as her health permits, at least. But, you see, unfortunately she does not care for literature or politics at all, and I want you to cultivate her taste, and explain delicately to her matters of public interest.”

“Pardon me, but it seems to me that you would be more capable of doing that,” she says, a frown knitting her brow. “Or if you would explain this to her, and suggest to her the line of study you wish her to pursue, it would make things simpler.”

He shrinks at the idea, and his eyes droop to his rather well-shaped hands.

“What a coward he is!” thinks Viva. “If he does succeed in politics, his admiring friends will fail to see him as he is, and will call him ‘Henderson the Prudent.’ Yet how he would revel in having the whiphand over one, if he dared possess himself of it. I must take care to hold the reins in this establishment myself.”

“You see,” he says, looking at her, at last, “it would be difficult to tell a refined woman, and one’s wife, that she is not educated to suit one. No, I leave it all to your excellent discretion, and rely upon your tact not to mention my wishes in the matter at all. I would suggest that you begin with the English poets—read aloud to her and try to interest her. Do your best. Try Tennyson to begin with; ladies all affect Tennyson, I believe. You will do very nicely, I am sure.”

A servant appears in the doorway: “Mrs. Henderson is ready to receive Miss Van Velssler.”

“Very well, Wilkes; and you need not return with a message, Miss Van Velssler will go herself at once,” and Mr. Henderson disappears into his study with a

rapidity that would have done credit to a transformation scene at the Casino.

Viva gets up, stretches out her arms and laughs outright for the first time since Charlie's death.

"He is as transparent as glass," she thinks. "The servant must not return, for fear he might incidentally mention that the lord of the mansion was with me. If I am asked, I am expected to have 'tact and discretion' enough to lie—it is for my daily bread," and then she ceases to see the ridiculous side of it, and throws her head back haughtily and stands looking thoughtfully at a bright geranium for a moment, then goes slowly to the blue room.

"Good morning," she says, as she enters. "I hope you are better to-day."

"Oh, I am never very much better," fretfully.

"That is too bad. Let me read to you; perhaps you will forget yourself," going toward the book shelves and throwing back the blue silk curtain. She is amused at the collection she sees; evidently it was selected by Mr. Henderson. She passes over Ossian, Homer and the old writers; hesitates at Max Müller, and finally takes down "The Idyls of the King." Delicately as possible, she explains the superstitions and legends of the reign of Arthur, and begins. Mrs. Henderson listens for half an hour; Viva thinks she is making fine progress, but as she turns several pages at once and lays the book on her lap to find the place again, Mrs. Henderson says:

"I have almost decided upon it."

Viva looks up inquiringly. Mrs. Henderson continues:

"I hope that you have some idea of dress. Mr. Henderson's sister has been staying with us, and she not only did not have a ray of style about her, but could not grasp an idea about the fashions, when it was explained to her. I do not know whether to have my brown broadcloth trimmed in mink or Persian lamb. The mink is very pretty, but they are wearing black and brown so much. What do you think? There, reach me the *Fashion Journal*, and let me find the place. Here it is—read me what Worth says about fur-trimmed garments."

So Tennyson goes by the board.

CHAPTER XVI.

ABOUT a week after Viva's arrival, she is surprised to find Mr. Henderson in the dining-room when she goes to breakfast. She has not seen him for several days, as he has dined with his wife in her boudoir, and he never comes home to luncheon.

"I hope you will take pity on me and let me have breakfast with you this morning, Miss Van Velssler," he says, turning from the window. I was very indolent, and positively could not force myself to get up when they woke me this morning."

She only says good morning and does not reply to his rather far-fetched apology for breakfasting with her. When she is alone, the servant arranges a place at the head of the table for her, with the coffee urn in front of her. He scarcely knows how to arrange the plates now—he wonders if it is the correct thing to place the companion at the head of the table when the master of the house is present. An ingenious idea strikes him; he will place the dishes as though he thought three were to be served—as if he expected Mrs. Henderson—and the responsibility will fall upon some one else.

"Will you pour the coffee, Miss Van Velssler?" says Mr. Henderson, pulling out the chair at the head of the table.

"Certainly, if you wish," she says, and arranges the cups, sends his to him, then rises and takes her seat at the side of the table.

"That is a mistake!" he says. "When two people are at the same table they should sit opposite to each other. The effect is better."

"I prefer this," she says, looking at him in haughty surprise.

"Then that settles it, if you prefer it—your wish shall be law," with gallantry she fails to appreciate.

He fancies he has, perhaps, gone too far, and hastens to do away with a bad impression by speaking of his wife.

"And how are you progressing with English literature?" he asks, smiling.

"Not at all; it is too difficult. I fear I will have to resign my position. You will pardon my speaking plainly, I do it in justice to you; but your wife positively refuses to have anything but the fashion journals read to her, and as I am not her teacher, but her companion and here to amuse her, as she mildly hinted to me yesterday, she reads what she pleases and I am powerless; I cannot keep her in, as I would a naughty child who had not learned its lesson."

He taps his spoon against his cup in evident annoyance.

"But, my dear Miss Van Velssler, you cannot expect everything at once. You must have patience, patience. You must cultivate her taste, till she grows anxious to learn."

"I fear I'll offend you when I tell you it is impossible to cultivate a taste for literature in a grown person who is in perfect ignorance of the most well-known English and American poets. I told her the story of 'Ruy Blas' yesterday, as she would not permit me to

read it to her, and she seemed interested for a time, especially in the style of dress in that day, but she got French and Spanish history so mixed that I was unable to set her straight on the subject. If I can make you understand this thoroughly, I feel that I can stay; if not, I must resign the position, for I know that you will be disappointed in the outcome."

"Well, well, it is too bad!" and he leans his head on his hands and the lines about his mouth harden.

"He looks better in such a mood," thinks Viva, looking at him critically. "He looks more like there was some hope of his being a statesman. His assumed gallantries to his wife make him look contemptible, and his extreme pleasantries when she is not by are undesirable."

He pushes back his plate, gets up and walks up and down the room. Finally he stops in front of her.

"I cannot think of permitting you to leave us," he says. "If any one can succeed in the undertaking, you can. Do your best and I will be satisfied. But you have brightened my home so much during your stay," looking at her intently, "and you cannot know how grateful I am to you. Do not mention going away again, I beg of you," taking her hand, before she can prevent, and bowing low over it.

"I simply wanted you to understand and know what to expect; there is no other reason why I should not remain," she says coldly, and taps the bell for the servant.

Mr. Henderson is therefore compelled to go around to the other side of the table.

There is something about him that savors of the

dramatic. He might have made a very good lawyer, if nature had not intended him for an actor, she thinks. To the servant who answers the bell: "See if Mrs. Henderson is ready for me to go to her," and she leaves the room as the servant does, thus avoiding a further *tête-à-tête* with the master of the house.

Several months have dragged themselves monotonously by. Very disagreeable months they have been, Viva thinks, as she sits in the hot little den of Mrs. Henderson, beside a huge lamp, reading aloud the latest things in summer gowns.

"But what is the use of having anything," says Mrs. Henderson, plaintively, "if one is to spend the summer here? The idea of those tiresome conventions keeping Henry so busy all summer is a shame, and I simply would not enjoy anything without him."

"Yes," thinks Viva, "that is the redeeming point in her make-up, she really loves him—that is, if such a selfish, exacting passion can be called love. Perhaps that is the reason he has so much patience with her—that and the plan of having her make her will in his favor. Funny though if she should die before her father and he, Mr. Henderson, should not get the money after all! I wonder if he ever should come into it, will he think it paid for the sacrifice of his manhood and the best years of his life? His youth has been sold into slavery of the most galling kind."

"Do you catch the idea, Miss Van Velssler?" says Mrs. Henderson sharply. "Or do you think the ribbons would be the most effective?"

"The ribbons, decidedly," says Viva, for she has not the vaguest idea of what the alternative is.

"I think so too," with a sigh of relief.

"May I come in, dear?" says the loving husband, at the door.

"Yes, come in, Henry. I wonder you can spare a moment to your wife from those absurd meetings and such nonsense."

"I wanted you to know I thought of you, dear, in Cincinnati to-day, and so I bought this for you," laying on her lap a velvet case containing a necklace set with eight large pearls.

She looks at it silently; not a word of thanks.

"Do you like it, dear?" leaning over her with his most dramatic air, as though her words would be a life-and-death matter to him.

"Y-e-s, I like it, but you know I prefer diamonds to anything."

"I know, love, but you have a diamond necklace, and I thought this would suit my fair-haired girl so well."

She looks up and smiles like a pleased child. She does not mean to be actually rude, but it is sweetest incense to her soul for him to prostrate himself before her, especially in the presence of a third person.

"There, you smile; I am repaid for my trouble. I must say good night to you soon, and go to work; I will be up very late to-night," he says, sinking into a chair and leaning his head tiredly against the cushions. "My stenographer was ill this afternoon, and I let him off, and I have to prepare for the press several copies of my speech before the convention to-morrow, which, with my other work, will keep me up so late that it will hardly be worth the trouble of going to bed at all."

"If you will dictate your speech to me, I will take it down and prepare the copies for you," says Viva.

"Eh?" he raises himself in his chair and looks at her in surprise. "Do you mean to say you understand shorthand?"

"Yes, it was in the business course at my *alma mater*, and auntie had me take everything."

"By Jove, you are a wonderful girl, Miss Van Velsler. Next you will be telling me that you can keep my books for me."

"I can," she says with a laugh. "Have I not just told you I took the business course?"

"What a wife you would make for a young lawyer!" he says, with keen admiration ringing in his voice.

"Henry," says his wife in a tone of reproach, "I thought you did not like brilliant or progressive women."

"I do not, dear. I might admire them, but I could only love a woman who is the exact reverse of the feminine horror—a strong-minded woman. I want my wife to know only how to be true and to make me happy," leaning forward, and as her hands are too far off he catches one of the blue ribbons that flow from her belt and kisses it.

He meets Viva's look of contempt almost defiantly. Mrs. Henderson returns to her fashion-plates thoroughly content with her lot in life.

"How do you do?" says Mr. Thrible, the junior member of the firm of Henderson, Ander & Co., as he enters the room. "Wilkes said you were in here, so I preceded my card and came right up," with a laugh.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Thrible; you have almost deserted us lately," says Mrs. Henderson. "But

if you are going to talk convention, I refuse to shelter you; you will have to repair to the library."

"Only a moment, Mrs. Henderson. I brought your husband some dispatches from the chairman of the Democratic convention, whom we have the honor to entertain to-morrow." Turning to Mr. Henderson, he says, "I heard that you only stopped a moment at the office on your way from the train this evening, so went over after dinner, and found these just being delivered." He hands them to Mr. Henderson and takes a seat near Mrs. Henderson's sofa.

Mr. Henderson takes the dispatches, looks over them, frowns and seats himself at the tiny desk, with its silver appointments, and says:

"Miss Van Velssler, were you in earnest when you offered to assist me to-night? You cannot know what a service it will be if you will take down some telegrams and notes for me."

"Certainly I will, if you have a great deal of patience, and will go slowly at first. I fear I am horribly out of practice."

They work steadily for half an hour. Then he leans back and rests his head on his hand.

"I don't know how to answer this," he says wearily. "Let me think."

Viva glances at the pair at the opposite end of the room. Mrs. Henderson has propped herself up with her cushions; her face is flushed to a delicate pink; she is talking animatedly and she looks almost pretty.

"You must not pay me such pretty compliments," her high-pitched voice rings out, since the other two are still; "I do not believe you would rather be here."

Viva looks at them with renewed interest.

"Can it be," she thinks, "that Mrs. Henderson cares for the attentions of gentlemen? Well, after this I am prepared for anything—*who* would have thought it?"

"I am very deeply indebted to you," says Mr. Henderson to Viva, folding up part of his papers and giving them to Wilkes, who has answered the bell, to take to the telegraph office.

"I am pleased to have been of service to you," she says carelessly.

"Come here, Henry, I want to ask you something," says Mrs. Henderson. "What was that Judge Berry and Miss Van Velssler were talking about last night? I have been trying to tell Mr. Thrible. Miss Van Velsler said she did not agree with Judge Berry, but as so many of the leading Democratic senators did, she supposed it was right. And he laughed and said she had the true Democratic spirit to stand by the platform of the grand old party whether he thought so or not. What is the Democratic platform?"

"Don't bother your pretty little head about such things—you will grow old before your time. Leave such dry subjects to me," he answers.

"He does not like me to take an interest in his political affairs," she says, looking up at Mr. Thrible.

"Whereupon he shows more sense than one would give him credit for," thinks Viva. "Heaven help his 'political affairs,' if you chose to interfere with them!"

It has been several months since Mr. Thrible called with the dispatches. Mrs. Henderson has grown tired of her new toy, Viva; it has begun to dawn upon her that Viva is trying to teach her, and she resents it

bitterly. She has also grown very jealous of Viva. Mr. Henderson has had to bring all his powers of diplomacy into play several times to prevent a climax. Viva has seen the drift of things for some time, but has made up her mind to remain passive till the blow falls; that the end is not far off, she is confident. Mrs. Henderson has declared her intention of spending her morning alone to-day, and Viva has concluded to spend hers in shampooing her hair. There is no sun in her room in the morning, so she decides to go down to the balcony off the library and dining-room to dry her hair. Mrs. Henderson is in her own den, Mr. Henderson is at his office, so the whole of that part of the lower floor is deserted—she has full possession.

Last night Mrs. Henderson asked her husband if he thought Viva pretty. “*I think a woman pretty who has red hair?*” he asked in astonishment.

“But Judge Berry says her hair is a rare Titian shade—a real chestnut auburn,” she persisted.

“It is *red*,” he maintained firmly, and the storm was averted.

Viva is in the hammock; she has spread some towels on the floor for her hair to sweep over as she gently rocks to and fro. Ever and anon she ceases reading and shakes out her damp hair. The hot sun shining through the heavy dark glass has a drowsy effect on her. The book falls to the floor, and she drifts into a delightful state of half-sleeping dreaminess. Finally that something which always makes us conscious of the presence of a human being causes her to look up with a start. Mr. Henderson is standing very near her. A flush of annoyance covers her face.

"It is unusual to see you at home this time of the day. Has anything happened?" she says, a little crossly.

He does not appear to notice her question. She gathers up her towels and book; shakes back her hair, which is dry now and floats around her a crisp, perfumed mass, and almost covers her, and is about to twist it up.

"Don't," he says almost involuntarily. "It is a pity to hide your greatest charm. You have the most beautiful hair I ever saw," going suddenly up to her and lifting a part of it to his lips.

She is too astonished to speak at first. He is still holding the strand of hair in his hand. His head is bent. She clinches her little hands tightly, and throws his hand from her with such force, that it brings the slender riding-whip he is holding against his cheek with a blow that leaves a tiny red stripe.

"How dare you?" she says.

"Surely you will pardon it when I—"

They both become aware that Mrs. Henderson is standing in the door of the study, her eyes ablaze with wrath and indignation. Viva looks at him scornfully and goes through the dining-room window to her own room.

"Well," she thinks, going up to the glass, "the little play has run its course; the lights are about to go out, and the orchestra is waiting to rehearse the music for the next performance. Ough!" and she brushes viciously the lock of hair he kissed. "I suppose it will be suggested to me that my resignation is in order, and I am almost glad of it."

At luncheon she sees no one, and afterward returns to her room in the expectation that something will happen. About four o'clock the parlor-maid appears with a hastily scribbled note:

"Will Miss Van Velssler please come to the library? Mr. Henderson will only detain her a moment."

"Now, 'lay on, Macduff,'" she thinks as she descends.

Mr. Henderson is standing at the window, with his back to her as she enters. He affects not to be aware of her presence for a moment, but she knows that he is from the nervous way he crumples a geranium he holds in his hand.

"You sent for me, I believe?" she says questioningly.

He turns slowly, as though to put off the evil moment as long as possible. She notices, with shame, that the tiny red stripe is still visible on his cheek.

"Yes, I sent for you. You were very good to come."

She is leaning against the back of a chair, and looks at him mercilessly, determined not to assist him at all. He bites his lips, a schoolboy trick he resorts to when he is embarrassed or trying to conceal emotion of any kind.

"You see, Miss Van Velssler," he begins desperately, with a kind of do-the-deed-ere-the-purpose-cool air, "my wife is a great invalid, and must be humored in everything. She has taken an odd fancy recently that you are not a friend to her and nothing can persuade her otherwise, and—" he seems to receive an inspiration, for he visibly brightens and adds: "As we will probably go away for several months—or at least my wife will be away so long, I want to leave her with her rela-

tives, as it would be too exciting for her to be with me during the election—our pleasant intercourse will be brought to an end.”

She looks at him closely to see if he means this for sarcasm, but finds him innocent.

“Yes, and when is the time set for the termination of the same?” she asks.

She knows that he means at once, and she intends to go at once, but she takes a malicious delight in affecting not to understand him and torturing him.

“We leave the city next Tuesday,” he says, coming toward her and into the full light.

His face looks drawn and hard; deep lines are about his mouth; she almost has it in her heart to feel sorry for him. He is evidently trying to say something to her; she has a mild curiosity to know what it is.

“Before you go, I want to ask your pardon for my conduct this morning, and the scene which, unfortunately, my wife witnessed.” She tries to stop him with a deprecating gesture, but he continues: “Need I tell you I have explained it to her and exonerated you from all blame?”

She wonders if he dared exonerate her to his wife.

“Will you believe me,” he asks, “and give me your hand?”

“Please do not say anything more about it,” she says, giving him the tips of her fingers.

She does not say whether she believes him or not, and he does not press the matter, only he grows a shade paler.

“That is all, I think. If you will excuse me then—”

“One moment,” he says, as she reaches the door,

"If you decide to take another position, will you unhesitatingly use my name as reference?"

"Thank you," she says a trifle haughtily, "but I can furnish those which were satisfactory to you."

She turns away, and he sinks wearily into the chair she had leaned against. She goes to her room and hastily packs her things. The next morning early she starts out to find a boarding place. She determines to be very economical, as she does not know how long it may be before she finds anything else to do, so she passes by the houses in the fashionable quarter and decides to try a house on West Walnut Street which was advertised in the morning paper.

How hot, dusty, and unlovely this end of the street is! she thinks. A maid with her sleeves rolled up and soot spots all over her face, after a long time answers the bell. "The lady of the house" finally appears, with numerous apologies for the disorderly condition of the parlor and halls, her own get-up, and everything in general. Viva arranges to take a modest room in the third story at a very reasonable rate, and takes possession in the afternoon.

She sends word to Mrs. Henderson when she is leaving, but that lady is in the throes of a headache and is not visible. Mr. Henderson is at his office; so she departs with no one to bid her good-by, as she arrived with no one to welcome her.

The weather is still very warm, and every room in the boarding-house has a screen door, with a spring that bangs it shut every time any one goes in or out. It sounds as if the house is being bombarded when the children play and run through the halls. Viva is not a

nervous person, but the noise nearly distracts her. It is useless to speak of it; it continues just the same. She sees very little of the people in the house, and they are mostly quiet and retiring. The women, of course, meet, criticise her gowns, wonder what "she is doing here, and who she is?" The men are plodding business men, and hardly look at her. The youth who sits next to her at the table, and who strides into the dining-room at dinner, on an average of twice a week, resplendent in dress suit, with flowing black tie, and a watchchain clear across his vest, attempts conversation once or twice, but finds her not very responsive, and subsides into silence also. It is all very trying—the inattention at the table, the noise, the dismantled condition of the halls and parlors. She wonders why it is that boarding-houses always seem to have the chairs and tables turned out into the halls for a thorough cleaning, which never ends, and yet everything is always so depressingly dirty. She is so fond of having everything around her dainty, and is so easily affected by her surroundings, that she lapses into a state of dull, listless misery. She searches the papers diligently for advertisements for teachers, companions, or governesses, and once or twice puts in an advertisement herself, but all to no avail. Once her hopes run very high. She receives a letter from the postmaster at Washington, saying there is a letter for her there which is held for postage; she sends for it and waits impatiently its arrival; perhaps it may contain good news, she tells herself. When it comes, it is an invitation to a Hammer College entertainment, sent by one of the girls who was a freshman during her last year. Tears of bitter disappointment

rush to her eyes as she reads it; she did not know how much she had counted upon it till then. She goes to several of the schools and applies for a position as a teacher. Most of them tell her their chairs are filled, and they have a long list of names on file for the first vacancy. One principal acknowledges wanting a teacher for the preparatory department, but she is filled with bitter and righteous indignation when she finds Viva did not receive her diploma, and sweeps from the room with great dignity. Viva takes her paintings to the shops, but if she manages to sell them at all it is for so little that it hardly pays for the materials. Several pictures are her father's that she has finished and offered for sale, and she knows them to be excellent; but the dealers shrug their shoulders and ask her where she has exhibited her work, and say the financial world is in such a condition that they do not dare run the risk of handling the work of a new artist. She remembers that some of the stories that she used to write for the college paper were very much complimented by some of the faculty, and 'Fessor used to tell her she ought to send them to some of the magazines. She hunts up some of the MSS., retouches and strengthens them and goes to the leading newspaper offices. They all say:

"We get our short stories from a syndicate, and every place on the paper is filled. We have the best material that can be had in the country, from the printers up; the city is overrun with writers and we have our pick. No, our fashion and society editresses are all that could be desired. We are sorry, madam, but—"

She is getting very desperate; her money is fast giving out, and she is getting to the end of her line. She has written to every one she can think of who would probably be able to suggest anything to her, but those who answered at all either treated it as a huge joke (it is so much easier to pretend not to understand than to write sympathetically) or said they knew of nothing.

The maid comes to her room, conveying the idea she is being badly used in having to climb the stairs, to announce that a lady wishes to see her.

"Did she send no name?" asks Viva, who is painting a picture she feels sure will sell, and hates to be interrupted.

"No, she never," says the maid, disappearing down the steps, thinking it unnecessary to wait and see if an answer is to be taken back.

Viva gets up, takes off her paint-apron and tries to remove the smell of turpentine from her hands with rosewater, and goes to the parlor.

"Well, young lady, if you haven't given me a chase," said Puss, springing toward her.

"Puss!" says Viva, catching her in her arms. "How delighted I am to see you! Where did you come from?"

"From Mr. Henderson's office directly," says that young lady.

"What!"

"I lost your address—did not discover it till I arrived—so had to wire Jen for it. I received her dispatch at breakfast and struck out for your abode on Third Avenue. The butler said you had not been there for

ages. I informed him he did not know what he was talking about, and sent up my card to Mrs. Henderson. She asked me to go to her room—she was not equal to coming downstairs (this after I had refused to leave without seeing her). She was inclined to inspect me till I put up my eyeglass, confiscated from my beloved brother for such occasions, and looked her down. She swore by the beard of her grandfather she did not know your address, whereupon I demanded to know where her husband's office was, as I knew you must have left some address so that your admiring friends could find you. Don't think she relished the idea of my seeing her pet lamb; may have been imagination on my part, of course. Any way, she could not back down then, so had to tell me where I could find him. I jumped into my cab (item 1, telegrams, two dollars; item 2, cab, three dollars—charged to V. Van Velssler) and drove to the gallant Henderson's den. He was very nice, quite so; wrote down your present address for me in case I should forget it; gave me this letter for you, which came several days ago, and said he had intended to bring or write his apologies for its not having been forwarded, but has been away and his clerk did not know where to send it; helped me into my cab and gracefully bowed me off—and here I am."

"You are the same old Hammer College girl," laughs Viva. "You have not changed a bit."

"Good heavens!" says Miss Griswold, "you wouldn't have me take to caps and spectacles in a little over two years, would you? I confess the wear and tear of two seasons is a good deal; but, give the devil his due, even society is not so bad as that."

"What is the news? What do you hear from the old girls?"

"I do not hear very often from any of them. You know that Kathleen Lenford is married, which, by the way, reminds me. I have a message for you from Fannie Bomar. She is going to be married three weeks from to-day, and she wants you to go and stay with her and help her with the wedding festivities. She vows no one can decorate the church or drape her veil to suit her but you. I wanted to be there—I have just come from New York—but it is impossible; my best friend is very, very ill and I must go to her. You have heard me speak of her, Nellie Beauford. She was to be my room-mate at Hammer, but they feared she was too delicate to go to boarding school. I must be at home by to-morrow night, or at least at my aunt's house, in the southern part of the State—I have no home—an awful thing, isn't it? I hate living around with relatives. I almost wish—but no, I don't, anything is better than a stepmother. Fannie came to see me just before I left, and charged me to pack you off at once. In the dim recesses of my trunk I have a huge document from her, which I promised to deliver to you. And I say, Van—I have a return ticket; my brother got it for me when he thought I was going back. I don't care, since he was seized with an unwonted spell of generosity and presented it to me. So I'll turn it over to you—you might just as well use it, for it will be thrown away if you don't."

"That is very sweet of you to think of it; if you are sure you are not going back, I will use it. But whom is Fannie going to marry? Any one I know?"

"Denton Overton."

"What?" says Viva, rising to her feet. "Whom did you say?"

"Denton Overton. Know him? Not much loss, if you don't."

"I have known him all my life. He is from my old home in South Carolina, though I met him long before I went to live with auntie."

"You seem very much surprised; as the marriage ceremony says, do you know any reason 'why these two may not lawfully be joined together' in holy wedlock?"

"N-o. Of course not."

"Do you like him?" asks Puss.

"Y-e-s. Well, I can hardly say. I have not seen him for years, you see—not since I went home time before the last," she adds sadly.

"Here is your letter I have been keeping all this time. Open it. I rather like the writing. Looks strong and manly."

"I have seen it somewhere, but I do not remember it," says Viva, as she tears open the envelope.

"Dear Miss Van Velssler," she reads, "I have just been to Riverside to get your Louisville address from Dev. I will be in the city on the eighth. May I see you? If you feel that you can be bothered with me, just send a line to the Galt House; if I do not hear from you, I'll understand, and try not to mind it very much. I am on my way to New York, and sail for England the fourteenth. Somehow I could not bear to go without at least trying to see you again.

"Yours very truly,

"LEONARD CLIVE CRAVENS."

She hands the letter to Puss, who is vainly trying to repress her curiosity.

"And when you did not answer it, he thought you would not see him. What a shame! I think it is positively wanton in people to be so careless about forwarding mail. Let me see—why this is the fourteenth; he is now on his way to England. I heard a great deal about him from Jen when she visited Dot, and I grew to take quite a motherly interest in him."

"I am sorry I did not see him. He was very, very kind to me when I was there—especially when I heard—you know."

"Yes, dear, I understand," pressing her hand.

The boarders pass by the door, taking a great interest in the unwonted sight of seeing Viva receive a caller.

"I must be off," says Puss. "They will think some one has stolen me for a mascot; I have been gone since early morn, you know."

"Can you not telephone them where you are and stay to dinner with me?"

"No, but I am going to take you with me. Fly and get your hat—your gown is all that is necessary. The hotels are deserted, and our party is in travelling garb. I am with a young cousin and his wife; we will bring you home, after we have taken in a concert, theatre or anything we can find. Hurry! I shudder to think what my cab bill is by this time."

"All right, I haste me on wings of economy," says Viva, disappearing up the steps.

A few days later she starts for New York. Fannie meets her at the station and carries her off in triumph.

"I am so glad you came, Van! I have been trying

to find where you were all summer. I know of no one so capable of settling the chaos and confusion of a full blowout wedding as you. I hope you will like mamma. I must warn you she is a little difficult, just at first. Do you know my cherished plan is to have you stay with her after I am gone? Her right hand is crippled, you know, and she will need a secretary when I am no more."

"How lovely it is to be with you again," says Viva. "Positively, seeing Puss and you so close together, and hearing so much old Hammer gossip and slang, makes me feel real young and giddy again."

"Now," says Fannie, as they enter the beautiful home on Fifth Avenue in the early twilight, "we just have time to dress for dinner. This is mamma's day at home; she receives in and out of season, and if we go through this way we will be able to avoid the belated callers. My room is across the hall from this," as she opens a door, and motions Viva to enter. "Oh, I forgot, you don't know where to find the lights. It seems so funny to see you anywhere but at Hammer. There! If your trunk does not come in time, you need not mind, as we will dine alone."

"Then I will be ready in a short time and will not await the sweet will of the transfer people," says Viva.

Viva stands motionless a few moments after the door closes upon Fannie, and stares at the gas-jet.

"How strange that I should come to assist at Denton Overton's marriage! What would papa think of it? I wonder if it is an unwise step—if after all these years, if he could possibly—bah! Viva Van Velssler, you are the personification of vanity. Fannie seems very happy;

I wonder if he—Miss Van Velssler, you have wasted ten minutes in trying to pry into your neighbor's affairs," she says sternly, looking at herself in the glass, and then hurriedly makes herself presentable for dinner.

"Are you ready?" says Fannie, tapping at her door. "Ah, not quite, I see. Well, I must go down; he is here," laughing. "As soon as you can, come down to the room at the left of the stairs."

Viva rather lingers over her dressing after that, but the plunge has to be taken sooner or later, and she may just as well get it over and done with, she very wisely concludes, so pinning a big pink rose she finds in a vase on her bureau on her breast, which brightens her gown very much, she goes down. As she enters the room, Fannie is fastening a flower in the coat of her *fiancé*. She steps back to see the effect, then standing on tip-toe kisses the bud.

"It is the most perfect bud I ever saw," she says. "Oh, Viva," slightly confused, "I did not hear you enter. Come here and meet Denton; you two must be friends."

"I have had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Overton," says Viva, going up to him.

"What?" said Fannie, "and you never told me?"

"I have only just come, dear, and you never gave me an opportunity to speak while driving from the station."

Fannie laughs at this and, turning to Denton, says:

"Why didn't you tell me you had met, when I spoke of her?"

"I scarcely thought Miss Van Velssler would do me the honor of remembering me," he says rather strainedly.

"Hum! His temper has not improved a particle since last we met," thinks Viva, as she sinks into a chair beside a low table, upon which is the only light in the room, a lamp with a pink shade.

She looks at him closely for the first time. She sees a man exceedingly tall; even she has to look up at him when she stands beside him. He has dark skin and a very brilliant color, which seems born of excitement rather than perfect health; his cold, sharp eyes seem to pierce one through; very thin lips, which close tightly over very pointed teeth.

"Then if you are satisfied with the stalls instead of the box, it is all right; I just stopped to let you know I did my best," he says moving toward the door.

"Oh, you are not going. Stay to dinner," says Fannie, pleadingly. "We are dining alone. Do."

"You forget I am in riding rig."

"We will pardon that," lightly. "We have not dressed for dinner ourselves. You will stay, then?"

"My dear girl," he says crossly, "why can you not understand that it is impossible without my having to go into detail?"

"Well, then, why didn't you say you had an engagement at first, instead of pleading 'not dressed'?" says Fannie, as she tucks her arm in his and goes through the portières with him.

"She will have need of that angelic temper, poor child," thinks Viva, as she picks up a daintily bound copy of Byron from the table.

The next few days they are busy with shopping and invitation lists, Mr. Overton having informed his *fiancée* by note the next day after Viva's arrival that the

city is too beastly hot in the latter part of September to suit his delicate organization, he would betake himself where he could get a glimpse of the civilized beings of the world, namely, Lenox, for a couple of days. Mrs. Bomar raised her brows, when she heard it, in a way that usually makes those unfortunate enough to incur her displeasure quake in their boots, and gives one the impression that it would be interesting to an impartial observer to watch the meeting between her and her son-in-law-elect when he condescends to return to his allegiance. Fannie only laughed and said: "No doubt the dear fellow was horribly bored; the clubs *are* deserted, and I have to be busy with milliners, *et cætera*." Viva was seriously disturbed, and waits with no small anxiety the outcome of his return.

Fannie wanted to rearrange the whole bridal party and have Viva for bridesmaid, but she would not hear of it, and said, when Fannie persisted, that she had a more important part to play, to see that everything went off properly, and it would be cruel to ask her, with her shade of hair, to take an active part in a white and yellow wedding.

"She is very sensible," thought Mrs. Bomar, who was present. "Of course, she knows that Fannie is very fond of her, but she readily recognizes the difference between them, and seems to have no ambition to thrust herself forward. Yes, I think I will ask her to remain as my secretary; she will be invaluable at the tea-table at my 'at homes,' and to arrange dinners during the season."

Mrs. Bomar is a tall, commanding looking woman, with cold black eyes; she has not yielded to time any

more than she has to mortal; she has refused to give up her youth, and her glossy black hair is as guiltless of gray and her step as elastic as at eighteen. She is a woman few people can love, but one who compels even her enemies to respect her. She has a splendid income, but she has made up her mind that it is time her only child is married and settled in life, and if Fannie had objected seriously, in all probability the wedding would have taken place just the same—Mrs. Bomar never lets anything interfere with her plans, once her mind is made up. She fancied Denton Overton when she met him at the seashore three years ago; he was the first person she ever saw who dared oppose her, or who had conquered her in an argument, and she seemed to respect and like him all the better for it. She met him again in town during the season, and he visited the house, at first, more for the pleasure of the debates and discussions with her than as a victim to the charms of her daughter. In the long run, however, and in the more subtle, feminine game of hearts she beat him, and dragged him in triumph, through the latter part of last winter and this season at Newport, at her chariot wheels. Dutiful Fannie falls as much in love with him as possible, as she would have done with any one else her mother might have selected.

“It would not do for Fannie to marry a weak man,” Mrs. Bomar had often thought. “Some women, who have always been ruled, as she has, make fools of themselves when you give them their heads.”

Certainly no one could object to Mr. Overton on the score of weakness. He is Mrs. Bomar's beau ideal of determination and firmness. Perhaps a less ardent

admirer might call it pigheadedness, but that is a matter of taste.

It is several days after Viva's arrival. She is putting on her hat before her glass, thinking of taking a short walk before dinner. Fannie has driven to see her maid of honor about an important item of dress, entirely overlooked before. Mrs. Bomar knocks at the door.

"I came to get you to assist me with these invitations we forgot the other day. Will you come to the reception-room if you are not busy?" appearing not to notice that Viva has on her hat to go out.

"In a few moments I will come," says Viva. "Rather cool that," she thinks bitterly, as the door closes, "considering I am not her secretary yet. But I forget that I am here as decorator and director of her daughter's wedding."

She feels remorseful when she sees the smiling face of Fannie looking at her from out a silver frame on the bureau.

"She doesn't know, dear child," as she takes off her hat and goes down.

The afternoon has slowly faded away, when Viva lays down her pen and says: "That is all."

"How very good of you to do it, my dear. I do not see how Fannie could possibly have got along without you," says Mrs. Bomar sweetly—she is always very gracious when she has gained her point. "What a firm, clear business hand you write," with an encouraging smile which would say, "Hope for the best; you may have the proud honor of remaining here as my secretary." Aloud she says: "Now I will take a short

nap before dinner. I hope you will not mind being left alone; Fannie will be here soon, surely."

"I will be very much interested in this book, Jerome's last. Thank you," says Viva.

She is very much absorbed in the book, and does not hear the door open.

"I expected to find Fannie here," says Mr. Overton, standing before her.

"Oh, it is you. I did not hear you come in. Fannie has gone to see Miss Dupont about her—"

"Spare me the details," he says. "I have heard a vivid description so often that sometimes I think it must be all over and done with. Why people cannot get married quietly and decently without upsetting half the country, I do not see."

"I don't know," she says. "I think a full-dress church wedding is beautiful."

"Of course you do; so does every one but the victims enjoy a free show like that. And they all go home feeling themselves done out of a good thing if something does not happen, if it is only the ring dropped, to croak over. I hope our friends will think they have got their money's worth for the presents they send."

Viva laughs outright.

"That is so like you, Tanky," using thoughtlessly the name abbreviated from cantankerous, that some of the men who used to frequent her father's studio gave him. To her surprise, he does not grow angry, but turns to her with a smile that is almost sweet, and his face softens.

"How that name brings back old scenes to me!" he

says. "I can see you flitting about in pinafores, dusting the armor and casts in the studio; and later how you used to reign over us all, the queen of that company of royal good fellows; and that last year in Florida, when you informed us, with great dignity, that you were sixteen, and would wear your hair up in a cue henceforth. Do you remember the grand supper we gave in your honor that night?"

"Please do not recall Florida too vividly to my mind," she says uneasily; she rather dreads this retrospective humor more than his ill-temper.

"It can only be a matter of mild curiosity now, of course, but I would like to know why you treated my letters with silent contempt. Nothing exasperates me so much as continued silence. If people will only speak out and say wherein I have offended them, or will quarrel even, I can defend myself or hold my own; but to have all one's reproaches, demands, apologies for unknown offences, received in silence, tries my temper more than anything I know."

"I never received a letter from you since that summer I was at Glenwood, though I probably would not have answered it any way," says Viva.

"No, you probably would not. Yet I wrote to you repeatedly at Glenwood and Hammer; surely you got some of the letters?"

"Miss Hammer kept every letter she obtained possession of; it was against the rules for the girls to write to any one but their families." Then, thinking the subject is becoming too personal, she rises and says: "Perhaps Fannie has returned and does not know you are here; I will go to her room and see."

"Pray do not put yourself to that trouble on my account," he says with mock politeness, as she goes through the portières.

Viva does not see much of Denton between the afternoon in the reception-room and the day of his wedding. They seem mutually to avoid each other, as far as they can do so without attracting attention to themselves. Viva is kept very busy. She gives her personal supervision to the decorations; selects the palms and potted plants from the conservatory to be used at the church; ties up the little satin boxes for the bride's cake, and, in fact, does everything, to having the rice and old shoe to throw after the departing and happy pair.

The wedding day has dawned fair and beautiful. Viva has assisted Fannie with her toilet; has fastened her veil with delicate sprays of lilies of the valley, and has expressed her admiration for the maid of honor and the bridesmaids, and has departed, with Mrs. Bomar, for the church. The ushers meet them at the door, offer their arms, and escort them up the aisle. A tiny page and flower-girl unfasten the ribbons for them to pass beyond to the seats reserved for the immediate friends of the bride. A murmur runs through the crowded church as they enter; surely now the long and patient wait will be rewarded. That is her mother. Has any one seen the presents? It is said they are handsomer than May Wilson's, who married the Count de Rotho, you know. Is it true he is so very wealthy? It is said his plantation in the South is a perfect palace, and filled with the rarest gems of art. Yes, it is generally known he has a villanous temper—inherited it from his father, who used to beat his slaves nearly to

death—an actual fact, my dear. Don't mention I said so, of course. Poor Fannie's looks have gone off wonderfully lately. They say she nearly cried her eyes out, when her mother told her she had to marry him. The Bomars have lost a great deal of money, hence the hurry, no doubt. Fannie would have infinitely preferred Jack Goodard, but—have they come?

So they gossip. The low murmur of voices fills the church. The organist is playing Rubinstein's melody in F. She plays it to the end, repeats and lingers over the second part, and has to select a new piece. Every one has grown silent. A nervous strain seems to be over the whole assembly. Viva's nerves are at the highest tension. What can cause the delay? She looks frequently toward the door. The organist trembles on the last note, and almost mistakes the opening of a side door for the signal. Viva wonders what can have happened; they were all ready when she left the house. At last the organ rolls forth the grand triumphal chords of the wedding march, and they enter. The bridesmaids seem conscious of the delay and are very much frightened; they hold to their huge bouquets as though for support; the bride, on the arm of her uncle, is very pale, and does not see the vast crowd; her eyes are fixed on the vestry-room, from out which comes the groom. The responses cannot be heard above the low, trembling notes of the organ. At last it is over. Once more the organ peals forth the sweet chords; the bridal party turns away from the altar and comes down the center aisle. The bride holds in her white and gold prayer-book her marriage certificate. Every one seems to breathe freer; the bridesmaids look up at the ushers

and smile, and even the page speaks to his little companion, the flower-girl, and gallantly assists her with her basket. The strain has vanished, and every one declares it "a beautiful wedding."

What is it in the cold, glittering eye of the groom that makes Viva shrink as he looks at her? She tries to shield herself from his view behind Mrs. Bomar, but all in vain; his eyes rest upon her face from the time he turns from the altar till he passes her. His shy little bride looks up timidly at him, but he does not see the glance. Viva shivers as she comes out into the warm night air, and draws her lace scarf about her bare arms.

At the house all is a blaze of light and splendor. Several hundred friends are present. Viva goes up to Fannie as she stands with her newly made husband under the canopy of roses, and throws her veil back, and kissing her, offers her best wishes. Something in Denton's face warns her not to speak to him, so she turns away without a word of congratulation and makes room for other friends who are pressing forward.

It is an hour after the wedding; the bridal party have come from the supper-room; Viva is standing in a bow window. Now that the excitement is over, she realizes how tired she is. She leans her head against the window-frame and looks wearily out at the brilliant stars. Some one thrusts the lace curtains aside and steps through the window.

"Ah, Miss Van Velssler, well met! You did not offer me your congratulations to-night," and Denton Overton folds his arms and looks at her mockingly.

"It was not because I do not wish you every happi-

ness, believe me," going up to him and offering him her hand.

"Ye gods, how women love empty form! Your congratulations to me can be but the veriest farce, and you know it. I wonder what whim of destiny kept you from being by my side to-night. I owe this to your father, I fancy."

"You are mistaken," she says, foolishly arguing with him. "My father never influenced, or tried to influence, me one particle in the matter. He left it to me to decide. You think he influenced me, because he was that *rara avis*—a father who did not try to push a dowerless daughter into a wealthy marriage. When he found that your wealth purchased his pictures for my sake instead of that of his beloved art, he refused to execute your orders. He despised money for money's sake."

"Do you deny that on that last day—"

"The day you smashed everything on the mantel (all his favorite casts, when I left the room) he said, after I had told him my decision, that he thought I had decided wisely and well."

"Well, you know what a temper I have, yet you tried me so; I apologized about the casts, though it was all your fault. Oh, Viva," and he catches her in his arms and pours out his love for her in such a mad torrent of words she is powerless to stop him.

She struggles in his arms, and the tiny dagger in her hair falls and catches in the lace at her breast.

"If it were a genuine dagger, I would freely kill you!" she gasps.

"Don't be a fool, Viva, and make a scene—dear to

your woman's soul. I see you now probably for the last time, and I mean to kiss you."

"Let me go instantly."

"I wonder you do not know me better after all these years. Do you suppose I will let you go until I kiss you. What did you mean by coming here?" fiercely.

"I thought you were not altogether a villain, and had some instincts of a true man about you."

Once more she struggles to free herself. How strong he is! his arms are as firmly clasped about her as though they were iron bands. She is aware his head is bending closer to her—then Mrs. Bomar stands before them, transfixed and gazes at them. His arms loosen from about her, and she rushes past Mrs. Bomar's detaining hand and through the crowded drawing-room to her own room. For the first time in her life she feels like murdering a fellow-being. What must she do? She cannot go before the awful, haughty gaze of that woman again. Her face burns with the mortification of it now. She presses her hands to her throbbing temples; she cannot think.

"Van, Van, come and hook my gown!" calls Fannie.

She must live through it calmly for Fannie's sake.

"Where have you been? I have been waiting for you some time. I thought it must have been some one else who went into your room, as you did not come. Is Denton ready? Did everything go off well? Did the page step on May's gown going out? Give me my travelling bag. Are you sure you put enough handkerchiefs in? I cannot thank you, dear, for your kindness; but I appreciate it *so* much."

"Go down, Fannie; they will be waiting for you," almost pushing her from the room.

"Kiss me again, Van," coming back.

Viva falls into a chair when she is alone and tries to collect her thoughts. She must go away at once. She seats herself at Fannie's desk and writes a long letter to Mrs. Bomar, explaining matters as well as possible, and takes as much blame to herself as her womanly dignity will permit, and begs for Fannie's happiness that it all be kept from her; then she hastily packs her trunk.

A week later she goes to the southern part of Virginia with an invalid maiden lady, as her companion. The salary is the veriest pittance, but it is at least a place of refuge.

CHAPTER XVII.

A YEAR has passed since Viva went to live with Miss Martin in Virginia—a very uneventful year it has been, its monotony broken only by an occasional church bazaar and letters from her friends. Miss Martin departed for Europe last week, accompanied by a niece whose claims she has been pleased to recognize, at last, and Viva received a month's salary and remained to shut up the house, and is now on her way to New York, that Mecca of the unemployed.

The train stops at a little station for breakfast. Viva has a horror of the rush and hurry of a railroad restaurant, and prefers her breakfast in the sleeper; so she takes this opportunity to go out and get the benefit of the fresh air. She buttons up her jacket tightly, and, with her hands in her pockets, walks briskly up and down the little platform in the frosty morning atmosphere.

"How d' you do, Miss Van Velssler?" says a boyish voice behind her, and turning she sees a youth who was telegraph operator at a mountain resort at which she and Marie were two summers ago.

"Why, it is Mr. Lyons; I am very much surprised to see any one I know at this out-of-the-way place."

"I recognized you as soon as you got out of the car, and when I finished my dispatches I came to speak to you, hoping you would remember me."

"Certainly, I remember you perfectly, and I am very glad you came to speak to me."

"How is Mrs. Guthrie? Though no doubt I have had more recent news of her than you, for I just heard a message she sent over the wires to her husband."

"Did you?" she says eagerly. "What did she say? Where is she?"

"Well, you see I can't tell you what she said—it's against orders—nothing startling, however. But she is at the Rennert Hotel, Baltimore."

"Thank you very much. I will go to see her between my trains. I am so glad you thought to tell me."

"Your train is about to pull out," he says; "you had better get on," and he assists her up the high steps and raises his cap. "A mighty fine girl that," he thinks, as she smiles a good-by from the moving car. "I'll never forget her kindness to me when I was sick at the springs, when the other swell ladies were above asking about or noticing the operator. I am glad I could do her that slight service."

Viva arrives at Baltimore about three o'clock in the afternoon and drives to the Rennert.

"Show me to Mrs. Guthrie's room," she says to the hall-boy.

Marie is sitting by the window with a piece of fancy-work, and looks up inquiringly as the door opens at her sweet permission to "Come."

"Viva," she says, getting up and dropping all her silk floss and scissors, and going toward her. "How could you get here so soon?"

"Soon?" says Viva after she has kissed her. "I do not understand."

"Didn't you get my telegram?"

"I have not heard from you for ages, and as the whereabouts of a naval officer or his wife is always uncertain, I wrote you care the Navy Department last week. I owe the pleasure of seeing you to little Dick Lyons—remember the operator in the Alleghanies that summer? He was at the train at a little station down the road and told me he had heard a message from you over the wires, so I stopped off on my way to New York, and thought I'd stay all night with you and have a long talk with you 'just to hold together what was and is.' Fortunately I had only bought a ticket to Washington."

"How funny! When I received your epistle last night, saying Miss Martin was going to Europe, I wired you at once to come here and go with me to visit Lola Whitney. She has invited us several times lately. I never told you, because I knew you could not go then. I wrote to her this morning and accepted for us both, on your account. I did not care about it before, for I do not like visiting relatives-in-law. But I thought it would be nice for you. She has not changed from the vain, silly woman you knew in Washington—only by a recent count she has grown three years younger—who used to rave over 'dear Cousin Charlie,' much to Charlie's amusement. He used good-naturedly to put up with her whims, and I think she was honestly fond of him, and so she wants you for his sake. Jeff never could tolerate her nonsensical airs, and would not go if he could get leave of absence. She is at her country home, Lilacmere, near here. But I am chattering like a magpie, as usual, and never attending to you. You

will find this chair better. Now you are more comfortable. Tell me all about yourself while I make you a cup of tea."

"I wrote you on such momentous occasions as when the village doctor or the rector and his wife called, or when we had spring cleaning—the days have been perfectly colorless, insufferably dull, with only the small irritating affairs of life to occupy one's self. I have nothing to tell."

"Well, *I* have, as the little red hen in the nursery tale says. Who do you suppose is here?" tilting the teapot in her eagerness, and nearly spilling the water. Then not waiting for a reply and with greater emphasis, "One of your old flames."

"Yes?" says Viva, cruelly, not betraying the proper amount of interest.

"Some one you met in Washington, and who went quite wild over you," insinuatingly.

"You forget my conquests are so numerous that it would be impossible to recall to mind, at a moment's notice, one of so long ago," with mock earnestness.

"Now, Viva, you know no one, not even my worst enemy, could accuse me of being a matchmaking person; but it seems like fate, his being here now. He came over to my table to-day, but as he said he was going away to-morrow, I did not tell him you would probably come in a few days. But it does seem strange, your arriving here so peculiarly, and I am sure something will come of it."

"May I inquire who this mysterious he is, this youth upon whose suit you condescend to smile?" asked Viva, with absurd solemnity.

"Do not tease, dear—I mean John Conway. His attentions to you when he was in Washington, getting that mining bill through the House, were so marked I had to tell him of your engagement to Charlie. He looked as if he wanted to ask about you to-day, but grew red under his bronze and did not. I am sure he is still interested in you. He is not a polished man of the world, dear—only a miner; but with his enormous wealth, coupled with his bluff, frank-hearted self, no woman could complain of her lot in life. Let me write to him and tell him we leave for Lilacmere to-morrow and will receive him, if he can call after dinner."

"Oh, Marie, if you knew how I hate the words 'wealthy marriage,' how much of that sort of thing I have heard from my aunt, and how mortified I have been over it all, you would spare me. I am worn out and just want to be let alone. Life is fast losing what little charm it ever had for me—I have seen so much of life, have lived so long. At sixteen, when my father died, I had seen more of the rough and poverty-stricken part of the world than most women of five-and-twenty. And since then—oh, heaven! it has been awful, except those two bright years with you. Sometimes I think, if this is youth, the enviable part of existence, what will old age be! It seems to me I have lived my allotted time in these twenty-two years. I am tired of visiting, between acts, swell people, and masquerading as a fine lady, only to go back to drudgery again—but the latter is sometimes not more work than playing the society woman. Let me go on to New York in peace. I am weary, *so weary* of it all," dropping her head in her hands.

"Viva," cries Marie in consternation, putting down the teapot, and going to her and clasping her arms about her. "There," she says soothingly, as if she were speaking to a little child, "perhaps it is all for the best. Who can say? Fate may have something very delightful in store for you. You won't mind my saying it, will you, dear? but I cannot help thinking you would not have been happy with poor Charlie."

"*Don't*," says Viva sharply. "I will not let you say that. I am so miserable I want to think I might have been happy—that it was intended I should be."

"I did not mean to hurt you, child; I only meant you did not love him as he would have wished."

"Do you think so? Perhaps he might have been disappointed in me. I was very deeply grieved when he died."

"Of course you were, as you might have been over a brother or a very dear friend; but I will not say so, if you do not wish it. You are too young and beautiful a girl to go about the world alone, Viva, and that is the reason I want to see you married. You know I am devoted to you and your interests and speak from my heart."

"To marry a man like John Conway for his money would be criminal—it ought to be punishable by law, as 'obtaining money under false pretences.'"

"Absurd! There would be no pretence about it. He is not a gushing schoolboy, to make maudlin love to you, but a plain, straightforward Westerner, with no nonsense about him." She seats herself at her desk and scribbles a few lines. "Yes, it surely is best," she thinks, looking at Viva. "I wonder if I can make her see it?" Aloud she says: "He is what most women

would call an ugly man, but you have too much sense to object to him on that score, and can appreciate his goodness. I have written to him; he will call, and you can use your own pleasure about seeing him alone. Excuse me while I take this to the elevator and have the boy send it to the office; my bell got out of order after lunch, and does not ring."

As Marie comes out of her room, she looks down the corridor, and recoils against the register, and does not notice that she burns her hand in doing so, but only gazes helplessly at the retreating figure down the hall. John Conway had come out of the adjoining room, and, with his broad-brim hat pulled over his eyes, strode down the corridor. She remembers with a shudder how plainly she heard the conversation of those two college boys who occupied the room last week. The room communicates with hers, and there is a transom over the door.

"He heard me say he is ugly, and her say it would be marrying him for his money," she almost moans, "and all before he proposed. I must not let her know, but if she asks will tell her he is gone." She tears up the note and throws it out of a window. She presses her hands together. "How unfortunate!" she says. "She seems to be a plaything of destiny. And oh, this is all my fault! If I had not spoken so plainly! I am almost afraid she will read it in my eyes. She would never forgive me."

To Marie's intense satisfaction, Viva does not ask about John Conway, and that little lady is saved by a divine Providence from having to perjure herself as to the whereabouts of Mr. Conway, and she is possessed

of an undying gratitude to the gentleman in question because he absents himself from the *table de hôte* dinner. Once or twice she thinks her hour has come, when she sees a tall individual loom up in the distance, and she seeks refuge behind the evening paper; but it is always a false alarm. She cuts short the last courses and quickly gains the safe harbor of her own apartments. She gives orders to be called for a very early train, much to Viva's surprise, who knows her aversion to early-rising, and breathes freer when they are going from Baltimore as fast as steam and the inventions of a progressive age can carry them.

"It might have been worse," is the thought with which she consoles herself as she leans back in a corner of the sleeper for her usual morning nap, which her unwonted energy has deprived her of to-day. "Viva," she says, waking up with a start, "have you any dinner-gowns?"

"Two; a black lace and a pale-green cashmere."

"Well, you know that white silk I wrote you about being made so wretchedly by that fiend Hortense, who can do beautifully when she is in the temper—the waist is entirely too small; can do nothing with it. It will just fit you, and by lowering the lace flounce on the bottom it will be long enough; so go to work on it as soon as we arrive—I cannot have you look not up-to-date before Charlie's relatives. There, now, not one word from you; I am dead tired and sleepy. Take my ticket and let me be disturbed at your peril," poking her pillow and closing her eyes.

"Are we there?" says Marie, reluctantly opening her eyes as Viva vigorously shakes her, several hours later.

"Yes. You barely have time to put on your hat and get your things together," firmly, as she sees Marie cast affectionate glances at her pillows.

"I suppose if we arrive at this unearthly hour we will find them at breakfast."

"No; we are nearly two hours late," says Viva.

"Ah, that is better. I would never forgive any one for arriving at my house, especially a country house, early in the morning, and upsetting my plans for the day. I doubt if there will be any one to meet us, as they would not expect any one but a heathen to come by such a train."

"But since the train is late, we will arrive at a very respectable hour—nearly twelve o'clock. If matters come to the worst, we can tell the cab driver to go slowly," laughs Viva.

They give their checks to the baggageman and charge him, as he values his peace of mind and his earthly welfare, to deliver the trunks at once. It is a beautiful country road; the day is clear and cool, and they recline comfortably in the heavy, old-fashioned carriage and drink in the delightful air.

"Tell him to stop and get some of that golden rod; it is exquisite and will look so well pinned on your black gown at dinner," says Marie.

"It would have been entirely unnecessary to tell him to drive slowly. I think he is putting his horses through their best paces in our honor, and we are not breaking the record," laughs Viva.

They enter the tall stone gates of Lilacmere; it seems a misnomer—the chrysanthemum reigns supreme. All over the large grounds, on the rockeries, in iron

vases, and in the flower-beds, the chrysanthemum blooms in chaotic splendor.

"What a beautiful place!" says Viva.

"Yes, Lola has good taste, if not much sense."

They go up the wide stone steps and on to the old-fashioned porch.

"It seems like the enchanted castle: not a soul stirring," says Marie. "Ah, how do you do, Jenkins?" to the man who opens the door. "Where is every one? Tell Mrs. Whitney we have arrived."

"Most of the house party have gone to Fern Glen; please go into the library and I'll tell Mrs. Whitney."

A few moments later a rustle of silken skirts is heard, and a faint odor of sachet is perceptible, and Mrs. Whitney glides into the room.

"So glad to see you, Mary, dear," with a little purr, and using a name she knows is warranted to ruffle Marie's serene temper. "Welcome to Lilacmere, Viva," with an affectation that, after all, is rather pretty. "I am so sorry I did not know you would come by this train—you always arrive by the other," with a little apologetic gesture. "And I gave orders that the Fern Glen party were to leave the wagonette, and it was to go for you at three o'clock."

"Do not say another word; we understand fully. I told Viva you would not expect any one in their proper senses by such a train—it was just a freak of mine. When I feel that I need some sort of punishment, I get up early; once in a while it is invigorating, like salts; but if kept up continually, it would be bad for my morals and constitution, I am sure."

"Let me take you to your rooms; then you can come

down and have a bite of lunch with me," says Mrs. Whitney, who met Lord Egdon in Scotland two years ago; and whether he spoke of his most sumptuous banquet or his breakfast of rolls and coffee he always said "a bite," a word which Mrs. Whitney immediately adopted on her return to her own country, and she has grown to feel she has the American copyright on it, and resents bitterly any one using it as she would their copying her best gowns.

"You will have your old room, Mary," she continues; "and I had intended the adjoining one for Viva, but Mrs. Thornton has it," leading the way up stairs. "I believe everything is in order," opening the door of Marie's room. "Yours is across the hall, Viva. Ah, here is Jenkins with the satchels. Come to the dining-room as soon as you are ready."

"Will be with you presently," says Marie, diving into the recesses of her huge travelling-bag. "If you had been up since the break of day, you would be hungry, too."

"That is warning enough, I hope, Mrs. Whitney," laughs Viva.

"My heart sank to my boots—which are new and B last, by the way, and very comfortably filled with only my pedal extremities—when she talked of a bite, till I remembered it 'is Henglish, you know,'" says Marie as soon as they are alone, removing her tiny boots and putting on a pair of dainty bronze slippers. "Well, I suppose we are fascinating enough, considering there is 'none to admire,' and we may as well go down."

"Come on, then; I am ready," says Viva.

"Who is here?" asks Marie as soon as the first sharp edge of hunger is dulled. "Any one I know?"

"Yes, I suppose so. Mrs. Thornton Claire—she has been a widow some time now, you know; Mrs. Wilder and her daughter, and——"

"What Wilder? of the ——th cavalry?"

"Yes; and let me see, Mr. Gresham—little H. W., you know."

"He is the dearest boy," says Marie, laughing at some escapade of Mr. Gresham evidently.

"He is madly in love with Claire just now," says Lola, with emphasis on the just now; evidently Mr. Gresham does not impress her as a gentleman to whom it would be wise to pin one's faith.

"And deserted me? Shameful!" says Marie.

"He is the very person to have in a house party; his spirits never flag, and he is constantly getting up amusements for the crowd," says Lola, as though she owed it to herself to apologize for honoring the gentleman in question with an invitation to Lilacmere.

"I used to hear a great deal about him from a friend of mine, a Harvard man, so I am very anxious to meet him," says Viva.

"I hope you will not be disappointed in him," says Lola, but with grave fears for the worst in her voice.

After luncheon they go to the front door and look out on the river, bathed in the crimson afternoon sunlight. Beyond the gates and across the road are the steps leading to the boathouse, a pretty little red structure containing two well-appointed rowboats. The atmosphere is so clear they can see out almost into

the bay. A steam launch from the hotel a short distance down the river is passing.

"I suppose you want to go to your rooms and rest," says Lola; "or, if you prefer, I can have the boats brought out, or you can drive, but I am a slave to my afternoon nap, so——"

"Do not miss it on our account," says Viva hastily. "We will go down to the water's edge for a few moments, and then to our rooms. Oh, there are the trunks! I am glad we will not have to appear at dinner in travelling-garb."

"It is an ideal country home," says Marie as they stroll along. Then after a while, "Come in out of this glare; your complexion will be a fright. Come on at once," dragging her in. "Now," she says, when they are upstairs, "you put on your dressing-gown and lay your fair self down on that couch, while I unpack and shake out your gown for to-night. Where are the keys? What on earth have you in this tray? Bricks? It is as heavy as lead. This is the gown, I suppose; but where is the waist to it? Don't get up; I have it now. It is very pretty. Now go to sleep, while I will spend the afternoon in writing to my liege lord."

The dressing bell rings before Viva opens her eyes. Goodness, could that have meant dinner? She opens her door and calls softly to Marie. That lady enters with her mouth full of pins and the ribbons for her belt in her hands.

"I wanted you to pin this before you go down. What! not begun to dress?" she says in horror. "You must hurry. There, that is all right. Thanks. Do you

need me to help you fasten your gown? If not, I will go down, for I am dying to see who is here."

"No, do not wait for me. I can get along beautifully; and, as you see, my toilet is in the initials."

"Be sure you do your hair high," calls Marie, as she trips down the hall.

Viva hurries through with her toilet: she hates to be late her first evening. She does not know that no one is ever on time at Lilacmere; and even at dinner, the formal meal of the day, the guests sometimes straggle in one by one. It is the most heels-over-head household in the country, and how it ever manages to hold itself together or keep up even a semblance of order is a mystery that has never been solved.

"I think it is wretched form to insist on one's guests being on time," Mrs. Whitney is wont to observe, "just as if they were at boarding-school or under military discipline. If they choose to be late and eat cold meals, let them."

And she reserves the same privilege for herself.

The drawing-room is deserted when Viva enters; Marie has wandered into the conservatory. Can they have gone to dinner? How awkward! No, the dining-room is silent as the grave. There is a man standing at the far end of the room, leaning on the mantelpiece. Surely there is something familiar in that indolent position. He turns slowly and looks at her. She stops at a table and turns over some photographs. If he would move from the shadow of that screen, she feels sure she would recognize him. He looks at her more closely; the bored expression disappears from his face and he comes quickly forward.

"Surely I cannot be mistaken. No, it *is* Miss Van Velssler. Charmed, I am sure. So you are the Viva they expected? I never heard the last name, but always 'My cousin, Mrs. Guthrie, and Viva come to-morrow,' " and Captain Parker stands looking down at her.

"An unexpected pleasure to meet Captain Parker again," she murmurs.

She wonders what it is about him that always puts her under a strain—perhaps the absurd carefulness of his manner. In the old days it was natural, she thought, when she was a shy schoolgirl, and uncertain of herself; but now she has grown to be a woman of the world, and the same feeling is present. She wonders nervously if he remembers their last meeting—the day he dragged poor little Freddy off in disgrace. She straightens the tips on her big black feather fan and then looks at him, and sees by the queer, searching gaze he bestows upon her that he does.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SHE meets his gaze steadily, then the rest troop in. She is presented to a dozen people at once, and has not the vaguest idea as to whom the names belong. Captain Parker stays by her with the evident intention of taking her to dinner.

"By Jove, Miss Viva," says a youth, rushing madly over the trains of the women and grasping both her hands in his, "I am just too delighted to see you again. I heard from Mrs. Guthrie a moment ago that you were here," shaking her hands vigorously, much to the detriment of a tiny jet band that crosses her arm and holds her very short sleeve in place.

"It is little Strauther," she says, with evident delight. "I can think of no one I had rather see than you. Where have you been all these ages?"

"Little Strauther," he laughs, drawing himself up to his splendid height. "I have not heard that since you cut the Jersey coast dead. It is funny. But speaking of those old studio days, I ran over Denton Overton in one of the New York clubs the other day."

"Yes?" she says, a little uneasily.

"And the first thing he said was, 'Hello, little Strauther!' How old names cling to one. Do they still call you——"

"No," she says hastily, "not since my father died;

but then, I have not seen any of his old friends, or not much of them, at least."

Captain Parker looks at this youth, who dares rush in and monopolize the woman he is talking to, in sheer disgust. "Who is the cub?" he wonders as he strokes his blond moustache.

"Do you know I am going to ask Mrs. Whitney to let me take you to dinner," Mr. Strauther continues, confidentially. "I have so much to tell you."

The "so much to tell you" is the culminating straw. Captain Parker's disgust rises to white heat.

"Worse than the average schoolgirl," he thinks, contemptuously.

Mr. Strauther picks up Viva's fan, and carefully getting out of the way of her train offers her his arm, and they slowly follow the crowd to the dining-room. Viva, after the fish, when there is the first pause in little Strauther's incessant chatter, discovers that Captain Parker is on her left and that he has fallen to the lot of Marie.

"I am fortunate to meet two old acquaintances here," Viva says to him. "But then a person who travels about as much as I is apt to meet people who, one would think, had forgotten all about one."

"And whom one has forgotten all about?" he says inquiringly.

"No, I could never forget my friends."

"*Could* you think *I* had forgotten you?" he asks, without a vestige of anything bordering on flirtation in his manner.

Again that strained feeling takes possession of her, and she is glad that the butler comes between them to

fill the wineglasses; and by the time he is gone, little Strauther is deeply engaged in telling her one of his Princeton escapades. Captain Parker devotes himself to Marie entirely during the other courses, and that lady, in the privacy of her dressing-room, several hours later, pronounces him "a most charming man."

When the men come into the drawing-room after dinner, Captain Parker goes straight to Viva's side, and little Strauther, who has told her all about himself at dinner, seeks some one to whom the details of his interesting self will be new, and takes possession of a stool at Mrs. Thornton's feet, much to the disgust of her other cavalier, H. W.

"For the most delightful hour in the day, commend me to the one after a charming dinner and a good cigar, when one is in a comfortable chair and talking to a pretty woman," says Captain Parker to Viva, with the air of a *connoisseur*.

"Shall I thank you on my own account or that of my hostess?" she asks.

"Pray do neither—one should not be rewarded for an involuntary action."

"Another pretty speech! I am deeply in your debt."

"Have you ever been to Glenwood since your visit there during the holidays?" with a sudden cessation of banter.

"No, the place was sold then," she says sadly. "A Dutch beer merchant is ruling at dear old Glenwood."

"Yes, I know; but I thought perhaps you might have visited friends in the town. We were ordered away soon after, and most of the fellows were glad to go,

since the pleasant tennis teas, and parties at Glenwood, and a certain presiding young woman were no more."

"What has become of 'the fellows'? I used to know nearly all in the ——th cavalry," she says.

"There have been very few changes in the regiment, except the death of the dear old colonel; and you remember Freddy Winston, of course; he was married in the spring—quite a swell army wedding—and then he resigned. She was a Philadelphia heiress."

"Poor Freddy," she says, smiling. "He never failed to arouse auntie's wrath, and always made her say she was good friends with him before he left her. My wildest imagination cannot picture Freddy as a married man."

Then she remembered how Freddy insisted upon her picturing him as such, stops, opens and shuts her fan, then looks up to find him looking at her intently, and laughs. At two-and-twenty it is easy to laugh at what seemed the veriest tragedy at eighteen.

Miss Wilder is at the piano with Mr. Lamot, of Baltimore, with whom she is carrying on a vigorous flirtation in any thing but a subdued tone, while her mother looks on in mild remonstrance. Long experience has taught Mrs. Wilder that it is useless to interfere with her daughter, who is considered the gayest and most headstrong girl in the ——th cavalry, which is saying a great deal for her. Mrs. Whitney is seated by a table with a book, and is insufferably bored. She is always bored, she thinks, wearily.

"They are paired off at once, like animals in a toy ark," she thinks. "Claire has two men; there always

has to be an extra man, and there is a grab for him, but she has got him this time."

There is always a dash of Bohemianism at the house parties at Lilacmere. The irregular hours, the gayety, and the utter freedom make it a delightful place to visit. Mrs. Whitney's balls and parties are always enjoyable; she never gives anything so foolish as a fancy dress party, nor so stupid as a *poudre tête*.

"One has no more right to say what one's guests shall wear, and put them to the expense of some silly fancy dress costume, than one has to say they shall go to the expense of getting a certain style of carriage to come in; and no more right to compel them to litter their hair with flour than to tell them with whom they shall dance or flirt," she has been heard to say.

If there happen to be two people who wish to see more of each other than the world approves, they may come to Lilacmere together, provided they are of the *haut ton*, and have a proper regard for *les convenances*. Mrs. Whitney cannot take it upon herself to be responsible for the morals of her guests, but she expects them to conduct their flirtations *sub rosa*, and would be the first to be horribly shocked and to condemn should a scene occur. The guests at Lilacmere are always of three classes: swell people Mrs. Whitney thinks it worth while to cultivate; people who think it worth while to amuse the swell people, who are, alas! often heavy and hard to entertain, and the people who are to amuse Mrs. Whitney. They are divided this fall: Mrs. Thornton and the Wilders belong to the first class. Mrs. Whitney thinks she would like, for reasons best

known to herself, to visit Fortress Monroe, where Colonel Wilder's regiment is stationed; little Strauther, H. W., and Viva—yes, she thinks she can depend upon Viva being amusing—belong to the second. The third? Well, from the way her ringed hands turn the leaves of the book she is not reading, and the peculiar expression in her eyes as she glances at Viva and Captain Parker, one might be led to suppose he had been invited for that honor. If so, he fails signally in his duty; his head is bent over Viva, and he talks to her in what could not possibly be termed a whisper, yet which cannot be heard three feet away.

“Considering Charlie has only been dead eighteen months, I think Viva is flirting rather desperately with Clyde Parker,” thinks Lola, shutting her book with a snap.

Lola Whitney is a woman pitifully dependent upon the society of others for amusement; she has no resources of her own. She was the youngest of seven daughters; the family for generations have been army people, and with no other income. When she was at boarding-school she determined to marry a wealthy man; the family had had enough of the distinction that the army and political position could give without money, and now money was the needful thing. During her first season she cut the young officers of her father's regiment, and labelled herself, “None without money need apply.” At the end of the season she married old Whitney; he was five-and-sixty, but she consoled herself with the thought that the older he was the sooner he would die and leave her his millions, and if she could have added fifteen years to his age, she would

have cheerfully done so. A merciful providence took him off in a spell of influenza a few years after the marriage, and he left Lola and his infant son all of his property. That was so long ago, and her youth has passed now, and though her fullest ambitions have been realized she is a miserable woman. Her romance came late in life, and that too is a thing of the past now. No girlish dream could have been sweeter, she thinks. She had always so guarded her affections, and determined to crush them and make them subject to her ambition before, that it was very delightful to give her heart full power to love as it might. How happy she might have been if her destiny had been fulfilled! How she hates Marie Guthrie, who interfered! Oh, if she only could make her feel half such suffering! But it is impossible; Marie is a butterfly, and happy in the sunlight of her husband's love. Try as she may, she cannot poison Jeff Guthrie's mind against his wife. She asks Marie here year after year, and invites the most charming, fascinating men to meet her, and watches her so closely: but all in vain, there is nothing she can turn or pervert to her own use.

"Viva!" calls Marie half an hour after they have gone upstairs. Viva opens her door. "Leave your door open, I want to come over and have a talk with you," then she looks down both ends of the corridor and flits across in her dressing-gown. "There, I am safe. I feared the men might be coming upstairs, but I suppose they are good for another hour yet."

Then, since she has just had such a lesson in regard to interfering with other people's love affairs, she very adroitly questions Viva about Captain Parker; learns

the whole story of their meetings at Glenwood without any very apparent curiosity. Finally she says:

"Viva, I want to warn you not to offend Lola Whitney; she would be a very dangerous enemy for a young girl."

"Offend her? My dear Marie, I am her guest, though there is no especial friendship between us; she is pleased to indulge in a maudlin sentiment about me because of Charlie, but I think she is incapable of really caring for any one."

"The strongest emotion she is capable of is hatred of me," says Marie. Viva stops unpacking her photographs and looks at her in astonishment. "Yes, it is a long story and would not concern you; and, as you say, we are her guests. But she thinks she owes me an old grudge, though I was not to blame; and I saw her look at you peculiarly to-night, and for the first time it occurred to me she might vent her spite at me through you. Jeff is fond of keeping up a friendliness between his relations; and as his sister is a cross old maid and refuses to accept me on any terms, I try to keep all this from him as long as she masks her batteries and keeps up an outward show of friendship. I just thought I'd tell you, as it might be a guide for you. Good-night."

Viva sits by her open trunk after Marie has gone and wonders what it can mean. She will keep her eyes open, and the thing will reveal itself in time, she thinks, as she picks up the scattered photographs.

"I did not want to tell her openly not to flirt with Parker," thinks Marie. "If she can marry the catch of the army, let her, Lola Whitney or not. He has not

grown better-looking certainly since our old days on the coast. Well, 'it is a mad world, my masters.' "

For the next few days Captain Parker rather rouses himself out of his usual calm and devotes himself to Viva—there is no one to interfere; every available man is on duty at the feet of his present bright particular star. Miss Wilder has completely captured and enslaved Mr. Lamot; Mrs. Thornton has her Harvard *vs.* Princeton affair well in hand, and the people who have come and gone during the week have been taken up with each other. When H. W. arranges a water party or an excursion of any kind, he scratches down Viva's name with Captain Parker's as a matter of course.

It is a perfect afternoon. Viva and Captain Parker come down the front steps and stroll down the carriage drive. "What shall we do with ourselves?" she asks. "Where can Mrs. Thornton have taken herself off to—escorted, no doubt, by her dual guard?" laughing. "There, I think I see them out on the river! One of the boats is here. Come, let us follow to bring home the mangled remains of 'the other fellow,' if the long dreaded has happened and one of the warriors rests on his shield."

"Your will is, as usual, law," says Captain Parker, who hates rowing as much as possible, and who would infinitely prefer a stroll through the grounds.

He has grown lately to refer very often and very touchingly to the old days at Glenwood; yet there is something peculiar in his manner, a shade of something that looks like fear at times. Once or twice he has seemed to be on the point of making love to her, but checked the words on his lips. Yet he subtly conveys

his admiration for her in a hundred and one pretty ways a day. Marie sees the struggle and watches the outcome with breathless and almost nervous interest; Mrs. Whitney looks on with gathering hate in her heart, and Viva—well, who can read the thoughts of the haughty Viva Van Velssler?

Captain Parker idly picks up the oars and, glancing over his shoulder, says: "Which way? Must that brilliant red and white coat of H. W.'s be my lighthouse?" and fully making up his mind to pass them at long distance.

"Yes. Let us ask them if they are going to the hotel, and if so, to let us join them," as she steers in that direction.

"Yes, your treatment of me that day was very severe," he says, taking up the thread of his conversation again. "'A headache' is so much more crushing than the usual 'not at home.'"

"That was very funny," she laughs, dipping her hand in the cold water. "But auntie thought Mr. Winston might return, and he was hopelessly in her black books forever, and was to understand he had the cut direct, and Uncle Josh mistook you for him."

He leans toward her and looks at her with an expression she has never quite seen before in his eyes.

"Then," he says in a low voice filled with emotion, "if you had known you would——"

"Have received you, of course; why should I not?" looking straight at him.

He pulls himself together, picks up the oars, and murmurs something conventional about its having been his misfortune.

"For genuine conceit commend me to a man who is or thinks he is brilliant," Viva thinks, as she wipes the little cold hand she has had in the water and puts it in her muff. "They are told so often of their brilliancy by people who really admire them or by people who feel it the correct thing to do, and which by leaving undone they fear would argue themselves stupid, till the conceit grows to be appalling. He thinks it was force of circumstances that kept me from rushing eagerly to him, and is fully convinced that now he has only to drop the handkerchief and I will gladly, humbly pick it up—only he fears to resign his liberty. Bah! of all fools, commend me to the brilliant one," and she gives the cord a jerk and nearly runs into the boat of Claire and her Harvard attendant.

"Ship ahoy! what cheer, what cheer?" calls Claire, making a bugle of her dainty hands, covered with rings.

"Run aground; we crave your protection," says Viva, tossing her the rope of her own boat. "Tow us in, Mr. Gresham; Captain Parker is exhausted," looking at him with crushing scorn, as he leans back with effeminate indolence.

"What will you give us?" says Claire, who grasps this opportunity to put an end to H. W.'s too ardent lovemaking. "It is a very easy thing to turn aside such pretty nothings in a drawing-room, when one can resort to a number of such womanly devices as bowing to a person across the room or asking for a favorite song, but in a rickety little affair of this kind, that threatens to turn over and end one's earthly career if one moves, one is at his mercy. Catch me in a boat any more!" is what that young woman thinks, as she

takes Captain Parker's oars, and pulls his boat after her by the rope used to fasten it; and every now and then she threatens to leave them in mid-stream sans oars if they do not vow to do her bidding forevermore.

H. W. does not condescend to enter into the banter, and looks at the intruders in a way wholly different from his usual genial beam, and rows so vigorously as to bring a color to his fat, pleasing, boyish face, that puts to shame his coat, and that might lead one to believe that he is practising to humiliate the Yale crew at New London. They land and all go up the drive together. H. W. is still disposed to bear malice, and hide from their gaze his good-natured smile.

"There, I'll wager tea is being served, and you have made me late, as you always do somehow!" says Claire, looking up at him with a glance that says she would *like* to chide him for making the hours speed with such lightning rapidity. It brings him round at once, and he gets as close as possible to her as he takes off her wraps in the hall.

"Late again," says Marie, as they enter. "We are going to reduce your supply of sugar, H. W., for every moment you are late after this," she continues, keeping up a chatter to prevent any possible unpleasant speech of Mrs. Whitney that might be directed at the delinquent Viva.

A close observer might have noticed a gleam of triumph in Mrs. Whitney's eyes and an impatient expectancy in her manner, but they are all so taken up with themselves they do not look at her.

"What a horribly long afternoon it has been!" says

little Strauther, with keen reproach, seating himself as close as possible at Claire Thornton's feet.

"It has been a most delightful afternoon," says H. W. with emphasis, not contented with having wounded the enemy, but twisting the knife.

"I was speaking to Mrs. Thornton," says little Strauther, pointedly. The pause following this is tragic.

"Dear me!" says Claire plaintively. "Am I to have nothing but this cup of tea, after rowing all evening?" She manages to convey by a look to little Strauther, which, needless to say, H. W. does not see, that it has been a *most* fatiguing trip, and she is in dire need of refreshments.

Before she has hardly finished, both spring to their feet, rush across the room to the tea-table and grasp a plate of cake, and, glaring at each other, almost run back.

"Take mine," says H. W., his dear little fat cheeks puffed out with the exercise and aglow with excitement.

"Take mine," says little Strauther, pushing his best curl out of his eyes, the better to plead his cause.

They both stand before her in uncompromising attitudes: it is to be a duel *à la mort*, they know. Which will she choose? Each impatiently waits and longs for the other's downfall.

"Thank you both so much, but I do not eat cake, at least not often," says Claire heroically, for cake, especially cake cut in great golden slices like this, is her particular weakness. "Captain Parker, will you give me some of those biscuits you have, if you and Miss Van Velssler do not want them all?"

And for a brief spell the catastrophe is postponed.

The noise and chatter of five o'clock tea is at its

height, when suddenly the door is thrown open and a servant announces "Mrs. Parker." They all stop and stare in astonishment; most of them know that it is unusual for Mrs. Parker to visit the same house at the same time with her husband. Lola Whitney is the only one who seems to have control of her tongue. She quite gushes over the newcomer. Marie stands transfixed, trying to understand what it means. It begins to dawn upon the others that there is something unusual in the air, and that Mrs. Parker's arrival is a surprise to every one except her hostess. After the first little clatter of her spoon against her cup, which might have been caused by the sudden opening of the door, Viva's face expresses nothing but well-bred surprise. Mrs. Parker is still deep in the first gush of meeting her hostess; Captain Parker rises and saunters towards her, teacup in hand.

"Ah, Theo, my dear, if you had troubled to wire us by what train you would arrive, we would have been pleased to meet you," he says, bowing over her hand and grasping it so closely in his anger as to leave it red when he releases it.

"I wired Lola," says Mrs. Parker, with a defiant shrug, that shows she planned this little scene and is determined he shall not carry it off with a high hand.

In truth, Captain Parker has not had the faintest idea but that she was settled in Tuxedo for weeks to come. He casts a glance at Mrs. Whitney, which suggests a settlement with that lady later, and returns to Viva, and takes up his conversation where he left off, apparently as unconcerned as though he had just welcomed a mere acquaintance,

"Bet there'll be a jolly row later," says H. W. to Claire, his tone indicating that he regrets keenly that the proprieties forbid his listening at the keyhole.

"Evidently something is up," said Miss Wilder to her devoted. "Parker is the biggest goose in the regiment about being gossipped about, and he is furious, for he knows as sure as the stars shine I'll write this home to the post to-night. It was quite funny about his wedding! We always looked upon him as a confirmed bachelor, and when he was away on leave once, about two years ago, he jumped up and married this woman *à propos* of nothing and without warning us at all. The fellows would not believe it when they heard it, and bets ran high as to whether it was so or not. Poor little Freddy Winston went quite broke on the subject. She is awfully unpopular at the post. *I do not like her, and I am the Colonel's daughter, you know,*" modestly. "Let us go over and talk to them: I want to get his expression to describe to Nell Mills. She is the Major's daughter and used to be quite gone on him. Miss Van Velssler," she says, taking a chair near Viva's, "I have been intending to have a long talk with you ever since you came. I have heard so many of the officers speak of you, Mr. Winston and Mr. Hunter especially. I was at boarding-school, you know, when the regiment was in South Carolina, and I have always regretted I was not there to attend some of the parties at Glenwood."

"Yes?" says Viva, politely. "I know Mr. Winston and Mr. Hunter very well. Ah, I believe they are making a move to go upstairs."

With almost indecent haste, although she lingers as long as she possibly can, Marie flies after Viva, and

never stopping to knock, enters her room. "Never did I hear of anything so disgraceful in my life!" she says, walking up and down the floor. "I thought that cat, Lola, was up to some mischief when she did not show her claws more lately, but took her defeat so humbly. The idea of every one in the house knowing it but us! The man is contemptible! I suppose every one, knowing the customs of Lilacmere, thought you knew it too; and the worst of it is, you will have to pretend you did, to keep them from knowing you were fooled and humiliated by her arrival. We will have to stay, of course, and accept that woman's hospitality until the time of our visit expires, because we are not men and cannot have that godsend, 'important business,' to fall back upon."

Viva is at the window gazing out at the gathering twilight; her hands are shut tightly and she is trembling, whether from anger or some other emotion, who can tell? She turns suddenly.

"Marie, let you and I not discuss it. It is nothing to us if Mrs. Parker chooses to visit her friends in this drop-from-the-clouds fashion. Of course we will not go away—why should we? And now go and begin your dressing; you know how long it takes you," and she turns her unceremoniously from the room.

What passed between the gallant captain of the ——th cavalry and his wife during the dressing hour no one knows. Certain it is, though, that Mrs. Parker sent word she was too tired to appear at dinner, and with an extra dose of chloral, to quiet her upset nerves, went to bed, much to the disgust of H. W., whose soul delights in a row, and Miss Wilder, who would have liked some more details for her letter.

That was last evening, and if any of the members of the house party at Lilacmere lost sleep last night, they do not show it this morning. Every one is talking of and making arrangements for the famous Hunt Club dinner to the farmers to-day. The old families, who never appear at any other functions, always show up at the annual dinner to the farmers. The houses for miles around are crowded to their utmost for this affair. The old families rather resented having a public hotel built right here in their midst when that enterprise was first spoken of, till they thought how convenient it would be in the fall for a reunion of the members and guests of the South Maryland Hunt Club. Viva and Marie have promised to join some friends at the hotel and to go with them, a proceeding which, viewed in the light of subsequent events, makes Marie believe it was under the direct supervision of her guardian angel, since it relieves H. W. of the awkwardness of not knowing whether to assign Viva to a carriage with Captain Parker or not. They all eat hurried breakfasts, and go to array them for the event of the year.

"What time do we start, Mr. Gresham?" asks Parker.

"Eh?" he says, looking up with a surprise at the formal address as he hastily dispatches a chop. "Oh, pretty soon," wisely thinking: "It takes a woman forever to fix her bangs."

He hardly knows what it is to be called Mr. Gresham; every one addresses him as H. W. Viva, at first, persisted in speaking to him in a more dignified fashion, but every time she did so it caused such laughter that she finally fell into the way of saying H. W. too. There is a legend extant that he was christened Hatha-

way Washington, but his friends long since concluded it was too long and did not suit him any way, until, I believe, the little matter had escaped the memory of the gentleman himself, and that he would feel some qualms of conscience about opening a letter so addressed. He flits about to-day, "earning his board and keep," as he says, and feels he must put forth his best efforts to know how he can get twenty people in carriages which ordinarily will hold only fifteen. At last, however, he manages it by producing an old dogcart that has been banished to a corner of the carriage-house; it is very rickety, but he devoutly hopes it will hold together until he is off, at least.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE Hunt Club wears a very gala attire; the flag is floating from the tower; from the great posts of the front balcony run festoons of gray moss, fastened with bunches of brilliant autumn leaves. In the drawing-rooms, abounding in trophies of the chase, are the sisters and the cousins and aunts, to say nothing of the wives and sweethearts, of the members of the club. On the lawn are gathered the horny-handed sons of the soil. At the left of the house is the huge banquet tent. In the distance can be heard the bay of the hounds, falling like softest music on the ear of the hunter. In one of the alcove windows overlooking the lawn Viva, Claire, little Strauther, and a couple of men, members of the club, are seated. They are looking at H. W., who is standing on a table, under a maple tree whose brilliant leaves look as though they were cut from the same cloth as his coat, addressing the farmers. If ever H. W. could be called handsome, it is when he is in hunting clothes—he has such a well-groomed appearance, and the merest suggestion of the hunt brings such a glow to his round face and such a happy light to his eyes. The wind is from the other direction, and the people in the window can only hear a word now and then.

He is telling them that it does not matter if their measly old crops are trampled down, it is done by the South Maryland Hunt Club. “Let them lay that flat-

tering unction to their souls and take what consolation they can," says Claire, laughing.

H. W. continues to speak; he feels the force of his own eloquence; his eyes are lighted with the fire of his oratory—has he not *her* for an inspiration? He brings his riding crop down with startling force against his chubby leg, to emphasize some fact. The farmers stroke their beards, which mainly grow under their chins, cock their heads on one side, and nod knowingly at each other when he makes a particularly telling hit. He rises grandly to his climax—they hear him distinctly at the window.

"Now, my friends, I repeat, it is an honor to be a farmer of such a State as Maryland! The farmers are the bone and sinew of the country! The farmers are *the People!* And if it were not for the farmers of Maryland *there would be no South Maryland Hunt Club,*" he finishes with a gesture, which suggests that words fail to express such an awful calamity. The farmers fling up their hats and give three hearty cheers for the South Maryland Hunt Club. Then they crowd around him, lift him from his pedestal, carry him on their shoulders to the balcony of the club, singing, "For he's a jolly good fellow."

"Whew! I deserve to be in at the find of every meet of the season for that," says H. W., appearing before Claire and Viva, and mopping his brow, though the day is cold.

"You are a treasure, my boy; a pearl beyond price," says one of the officers of the club, slapping him on the back. "No one can hoodwink the old duffers like you."

H. W. is "away and beyond" the hero of the hour. Every one makes much of him. Claire pushes her skirts aside for him to sit beside her, and smiles on him. She is wearing the colors of the club. Little Strauther curses his luck he was not born a Southerner and president of a hunt club. "No one could win against such terrible odds as these," he thinks, gloomily.

The farmers enjoy the day in the tents on the lawn, while the club members and their guests make merry, talk scandal, and flirt with their neighbors' wives within. H. W., as president of the club, sits at the head of the table in the dining-room, with Mrs. Thornton in the place of honor, on his right. Viva has been taken possession of by a youth who has been staying at a country house near, but who will join the party at Lilacmere to-morrow. Little Strauther, in his woe, stays by her also; so she sees nothing of Captain Parker. Mrs. Whitney is very much put out to-day—her son has come down for the festivities, and he is so embarrassingly old-looking. How shocked every one was who saw him! Surely he looks ten years older than little Strauther, and he is exactly the same age. It really is exasperating.

"Have you seen my son since his arrival this morning, Mr. Strauther?" asks Lola, with a smile that is meant to be sweet. "He looks so old I am positively afraid of him. Some one told me he would not have been surprised if I had said we were twins. Dick is your age exactly, you know."

"Yes; and, by the way, that is funny! I am twenty-two, and you told me yesterday how old you are; so, according to that, you must have been married at eight

and were a mother at nine," says little Strauther, dying to make some one as miserable as himself.

Lola bites her lips in anger, and every one at that end of the table develops a wild and sudden interest in the weather and begins to exchange opinions about it at once. Mrs. Parker is next to Lola and enjoys it hugely. She is her best friend, and makes a note of it, to tell the next time they are rivals. Mrs. Parker is a tiny specimen of humanity—looks like a French doll with her exaggeratedly curled hair and her carefully inked eyes, which are always stretched open wide, with the baby stare carried to the extreme. She looks very delicate and fragile, and her excessively pallid complexion would only need half the pearl powder religiously applied every two hours. She is nervous and excitable, her gown is startlingly French, and one's tired eyes gaze on ruffles, puffs, and fastenings till one wonders meekly how one brain could have conceived such an affair. Just now Mrs. Parker is engaged in subjugating an old beau, whose gallantries belong to the last century; and, be it said to her credit, since she would consider it so, he is fast losing his head.

There is dancing afterward, when they drive back under the clear autumn stars.

The next morning Marie goes up to Viva, who is sitting in a sunny arbor with the new addition to the party, Mr. Hutchins, and says: "I have just received a telegram from Jeff, telling me to join him at once."

"Nothing the matter, I hope," says Mr. Hutchins, all sympathy, thinking it behooves him to make an impression on the chaperon.

"Oh, no; I am accustomed to being dragged off, at

a moment's notice, to the other end of the continent. Of course it is just one of his freaks; still I am always a little uneasy till I hear again, after such a telegram as this. I have wired I leave on the afternoon train, and to let me know if he is ill. Mrs. Thornton and Mr. Strauther drove to the village with the message."

"I'll go up with you and help you pack," says Viva, and, with a pretty little nod to Mr. Hutchins, she tucks her arm in Marie's and goes across the lawn with her.

"Now," says Marie, as she flits about, ties up boxes, and stows away gowns in wondrously small places, "there is no need of your leaving before the end of the week—I do not want you to go a moment sooner than you promised to stay—there is no need in giving the fair Lola & Co. a speck of an opportunity of saying anything spiteful. I have written to Mrs. Withersly, the boarding-house woman, that you are coming, and that you are my friend. You can manage to put up with her and the airs of her absurd, giggling daughter, I suppose, though I must confess I never stop there when I am in New York unless I am alone—you know Jeff's fad for not liking me to be at a hotel alone. Let me see, I'll wear the blue gown—no, I packed the waist to it; well, then, the brown one. I know you have tact and diplomacy enough to defeat Lola at her own game, but be careful, and keep me posted of all that goes on; and if Jeff's answer to my telegram does not come before I leave, be sure to repeat it to me on the road. That is all. Now if you will vanish, I'll take a tiny nap before luncheon."

Viva drives Marie to the station in the road-cart, sees her off, and then turns the horse's head toward Lilac-

mere again. It is such a perfect afternoon, that before she has gone very far she concludes to give the groom the reins and walk back. She draws her fur boa closely about her throat and puts her hands in the pockets of her tight-fitting jacket and walks down the road, the dry twigs and leaves crackling under her feet. She must hurry if she wants to be in time for tea, she thinks. Bah! the overheated rooms, the gossip, the flirtations pall on her, and cannot be compared to this delightful air and beautiful scene—she means to enjoy it. From the road just here is a view of the river: it looks dark and angry as it rushes by the brown, barren banks, and strangely deserted by the little pleasure-boats and steam launches, laden with gay parties, which used to ride so proudly on its bosom a short time ago. The sun is almost setting and hangs like a huge ball of fire in the opal sky, which fades away into pale pink and gray tints. She seats herself on a fallen log, rests her elbow on her knee, and her chin in her palm, and thinks. Overhead are the brilliant red and gold maple leaves; some of them fall upon her shoulders and in her lap. The dead leaves crackle as some one steps upon them; the branches behind her are parted, and Captain Parker says:

“I thought I would find the artist’s daughter here. This is the most beautiful spot on the river. I saw the cart returning empty, and knew that you had walked back. You make a beautiful picture here, like Autumn when she first discovers her triumph is waning; her reign is about to end, and she must abdicate her throne. I always thought there was an element of tragedy in your face. It is an ideal day to end a summer idyl, with all nature to assist at the sad finale.”

"It is an ideal day to plan one's winter coat," says Viva, briskly. Then she adds hurriedly as she sees the expression in his eyes: "Have you seen the morning papers? I must confess that, in the pow-wow of getting Mrs. Guthrie off, I have not. The Government may be overthrown for all I know, or the President——"

"A soldier has nothing to do with politics," he says testily.

"Oh, has he not?" she says airily; "then it behooves him to take an interest at once. What will become of you and your brother officers if they pass that bill forcing the army and navy men to resign instead of retiring from the service, thereby stopping altogether their pay? Now, if it were not for the awful possibility of that law, I'd really encourage Jack. Did I ever tell you of my artillery love? No? That is strange. Jack's image is always in my heart. But fancy an old man—you retire at two-and-sixty do you not?—starting out to learn a new profession and to begin again in the world. No, not even the dash and glitter of army life in one's youth can compensate for poverty-stricken old age. Let me see, when Jack is two-and-sixty I'll be sixty—why, I would rather beg now than then, for people are always so much more charitable to picturesque beggars. With a bright red shawl over my head and a few artistically arranged rags, like the sage hoyden, I'd make a picturesque beggar, eh? If the Government would only promise to give us a postal frank, it would not be so bad; but never to hear from any of one's friends would be a very sad state of affairs indeed! And a beggar could not spend money for paper, stamps, and sealing-wax, could she? Yes, I seriously think——"

"Viva," he says sternly, "look at me and do not talk nonsense."

She does look at him—throws back her head and looks steadily at him; but, to save her life, she cannot prevent the color from rushing to her face. She grows angry with herself, but that only makes the matter worse.

"This is the first time I have ever succeeded in bringing the color to your cheeks," he says, looking at her with menacing admiration.

"It is you who are talking nonsense, Captain Parker," as lightly as possible. "I am going to the house now."

"Are you?" and he leans forward and places his hand in front of her on the trunk of the tree against which she has been leaning, thus hemming her in. Where is her usual tact and what makes her so frightened? she wonders. His breath almost touches her cheek; she can feel his eyes searching her face, and knows rather than sees the passion that is in them, all the stronger, perhaps, because it is restrained. She nervously pulls to pieces the leaves which have fallen in her lap, and does not raise her eyes again.

"Some one is coming," she says gladly and at the same time imploringly—will he have time to rise to his feet?

Little Strauther appears in the path. "Take care, Mrs. Parker," he says, springing in front of her and catching her hand. "Beg pardon, I was afraid you did not see that rock in the path and would fall over it," he adds apologetically as he resumes his position beside her.

They are beside Viva and Captain Parker now. Mrs.

Parker forgets her baby stare for once, and her eyes almost close as she looks maliciously at them. Little Strauther wonders if he overdid the matter, and curses the luck that made him leave the house.

"So this is why my lady smiled upon me, and hooked me into strolling with her; for I might have known it was not for my own personal charms. Confound her!" he thinks as he stands with his hands in his overcoat pockets, but with his thumbs on the outside, and he assiduously polishes a button on his coat with the left one.

"There are some papers at the house for you from the department marked important—perhaps it would be worth your while to look into the matter," Mrs. Parker says to her husband, her eyes roving from him to Viva and back again.

"Thank you; you are very good to trouble. I dare say they can wait till after dinner," he says carelessly.

They look at each other for a moment, each measuring the other's strength. Then she says:

"Studying botany, Miss Van Velssler? Rather cold even for that pleasant pastime, I fancy." The manner is distinctly disagreeable.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Parker; I think I have not had the pleasure before to-day."

"Er—I spoke to you when I came up, of course," says Mrs. Parker, a trifle disconcerted.

"Viva, I bet I can hit that log down the river with this rock. What do you say? Mend my riding gloves if you lose?" calls little Strauther, who has gone to the water's edge.

She slowly follows him. Then, when they are out of earshot, he places her hand on his arm and says:

"They are a jolly pair—a pair to draw to. A pity they can't meet without making every one else wish they were at the devil. If they turn that corner before we get to the little iron gate, we are lost. Come, cut for it," and he takes her hand and they run as fast as their heels can fly to a side gate. Viva is out of breath and almost hysterical. She leans against the gate and her breath comes in irregular gasps. "Now chase yourself," he says. "The whole shooting-match of us dine with the Ordway-Smiths to-night remember," and he opens a door to the rear hall, and so she escapes to her own room without meeting any one.

When every one is assembled on the front balcony to drive to the Ordway-Smiths' for dinner, Viva manages to be put in a carriage with Claire and her two attendants.

Mrs. Ordway-Smith is a very young hostess, and in fact this is her first grand dinner party since her marriage. The gossips say that young Ordway-Smith was a fool to marry a woman with nothing in the world to recommend her but her beauty, when he could have had any girl in the State for the asking. She is very nervous to-night, for fear everything will not go off right. The "old families" and the county magnates generally are invited, and the "old families" are so critical. She goes over the list again and again, and wonders if she has put the right people with the right people: that is such an important item.

"Are you sure, Dick, that I will have to go out with old Judge Mayard? He is so critical. I'd rather go with that cute little man they call H. W."

"Nonsense, my dear; Judge Mayard is the most distinguished man on the Maryland bench; of course, as hostess, you must go with him."

"I have put that depressingly brilliant Mr. Griffin with the girl from Lilacmere they say is so bright. None of the other women are up to his mark, I know. He says that women ought to be kept in school till they are five-and-twenty; that the reason there are no such statesmen now as Webster and Calhoun is that the women have degenerated into society butterflies, and it is a fact in science that children inherit their brains from the mother. Ough! he is awful, *I* think! Do not let him talk to me alone, will you, Dick? All those carriages must be the Lilacmere people, and I hear some one calling H. W. Are you sure my gown is all right? Did you see the dining-room? Do contrive to get a peep at it before we go in. So glad to see you, Mrs. Whitney. Did you have a very cold drive? These early fall nights are sometimes quite severe."

H. W. has gone off with Claire in triumph to show her the small conservatory back of the last drawing-room, and little Strauther is left disconsolate beside Viva.

"It's no use. I think I'll give up and put an end to myself," he says tragically. "How can a poor beggar like I am expect any thing else, any way! Do you know they stopped my allowance when I left college?"

"Then I should have gone on indefinitely to college," she says promptly. "I'd have flunked, as you say, the last exams. as regularly as they came," hiding a smile behind her fan.

"By Jove, you have a great head!" admiringly.

"Well, I set up a law office; the furniture cost a fortune, papa said; engaged a typewriter and stenographer, and waited for clients. At the end of the first month not a soul but some of the fellows to see about the Germans had been in the office, so I concluded I'd better retrench and parted company with the typewriter. She cried, and said she had 'never worked for so kind a gentleman before.' I suppose not; the only letter she had written was to my tailor, saying I'd settle his little bill as soon as possible. But," coming back to the hideous present, "how on earth a stunning woman like that can bear to have a *Harvard* man always dangling at her heels I do not see," with crushing scorn on the name of the hated order. "Say, Viva, do you think Mrs. Thornton would *marry* a Harvard man? They can't play foot-ball, by a long shot."

"I am sure she would not," says Viva, consolingly. "She told me last night that she admired the tiger above all animals, and I know for a certainty that she is going to wear the Princeton colors at the Thanksgiving game."

"You are an angel, Viva; I always said so. Just let me know if ever you want anybody's head punched."

Viva is laughing merrily when Mr. Griffin is presented, and offers her his arm to take her to dinner. The young lawyer, who Judge Mayard said was the only man in Maryland fit to succeed him, thinks it does not argue much for her brain power if she can be so amused at the sayings of an infant like that.

CHAPTER XX.

FOR the first two courses Viva's attention wanders; she is not thinking of the facts and statistics the young lawyer is pouring into her ear. She becomes aware that he has paused for an answer; she has not the slightest idea what he has been talking about, her mind has been busy with her own tangled affairs. He tosses back the hair from his massive brow and continues disgustedly, as though he knows she is incapable of grasping his meaning; but rather than keep silent he will talk to an unappreciative young woman.

"Unquestionably the pension leech which has been draining the national treasury should be strangled by the Democracy, now that it is in power. It is the imperative duty of every Member of Congress to see to it at once. Just think of it, the amount paid out for pensions will soon reach two hundred and fifty millions a year. Twenty years ago, no one ever dreamed of its reaching fifty millions."

Mrs. Ordway-Smith sees Viva's inattention and almost forgets to agree with a statement made by Judge Mayard—not that she understands, but if he says so, it must be so. Certainly it is easier to agree than to argue the point.

"She is not entertaining Mr. Griffin at all," thinks Mrs. Ordway-Smith, irritatedly. "Now, he will go away and say I am a society doll and do not know how

to arrange a dinner party. I'd like to know what a nobody like that supposes she is invited for, if not to amuse impossible people. I will not ask her again, that is sure."

Viva finally catches the drift of Mr. Griffin's flights and makes an effort to overcome herself, and succeeds quite cleverly in winding him up on one of his pet hobbies, and he grandly remarks he will think over her side of the question and will let her know the next time he sees her upon what he has decided. "A remarkably clever girl," he tells the men over their cigars, and Viva's fortune is made evermore in Maryland.

There is an informal dance on the programme later at Lilacmere; the Ordway-Smiths, the "old families," the county magnates, and a few guests of the hotel near, who have come down for the first meet of the season day after to-morrow, are invited. They dance in the billiard room and light refreshments are continually served in the library, across the hall. Viva is standing in a doorway, talking to H. W., who is out of the running to-night, since he dances very badly, and dancing is little Strauther's strong point. The tables are turned since the day of the Hunt Club dinner, and little Strauther rides triumphantly on the crest of the wave. Claire, who has divided and subdivided every number on her card, has been pleased to bestow upon him two whole waltzes, and has half-way promised another after a while if he is good, whereupon he swears he would take the conduct medal over an angel. Viva is wearing Marie's gift, the white silk, and has an immense bouquet of lavender chrysanthemums pinned on her breast,

One of the glories of the departed Carrols, a pearl star, gleams at her white throat.

"Am I to have a waltz?" says Captain Parker as he stops in the doorway.

"I am engaged for all the round dances," she answers.

"For this one too?"

"This is Mr. Gresham's dance. We are just resting."

"Oh, I know H. W. will not mind dividing with an old friend," and H. W., conscious of his own deficiency in the dancing line, says yes.

They float down the room together. She forgets that she has made up her mind to be distinctly disagreeable to him during the remaining two days of her visit. She intends to leave Saturday—then, why not take the first train and so get rid of part of that day? Then there is only to-morrow and next day: surely with packing and letter-writing as legitimate excuses, she can avoid him. She forgets it all and only remembers she is waltzing with the best dancer in the United States Army, and to the most delicious music she ever heard. Tall as he is, the little Prince of Wales feathers in her hair blow against his face and the downy particles cling to his lips as he breathes upon them. Once, as a couple coming from the opposite direction runs against them, he tightens his hold upon her hand and skilfully guides her out of the way, but he does not loosen his clasp again. They dance on and on, remembering only to keep time to the intoxicating music, till the last notes die tremblingly in the air. They do not speak, but quietly follow the other dancers into the hall. Mr. Lamot claims her to have an ice with Miss Wilder, Mr. Griffin, and himself.

"I must have part of the next waltz," Captain Parker whispers as he releases her hand from his arm.

After the refreshments Viva goes directly to her room.

"No more dancing for you, young woman; you are out of your senses surely, and will need a keeper soon. You are going to leave this house to-morrow morning on the early train, do you understand?" she says to herself sternly, looking in the glass.

She hastily packs and then scribbles Lola a note.

"DEAR MRS. WHITNEY:—I am very sorry, but upon coming to my room to-night, I find a telegram which will hasten my departure to New York. I leave long before you will be up, so will not disturb you, as I know your objection to being forced to get up early, but make my adieus to you this way. I regret it all exceedingly, and more than anything not having an opportunity of thanking you in person for my delightful visit.

"Hoping to see you in New York soon, I am,

"Yours cordially,

"VIVA VAN VELSSLER."

She seals it with Miss Carrol's ring, a parting gift, and leans back in her chair. She hears little Strauther come up and go into a kind of smoking-room at the end of the hall. She has an impulse to go out and speak to him, to tell him she is going—she is very lonely in this house filled with pleasure-seekers—and to have him wish her well. But bah! little Strauther would be no better than the rest of them, no doubt, if put to the test; and it is written she must be alone and fight her own battles, and she cannot "avoid the doom of destiny." She leaves the envelope of Marie's telegram, saying she arrived safely and found Jeff all right, which came just

before dinner, in a conspicuous place on the dresser. "That will do as well as anything," she says, and is on her way to New York the next morning while the inmates of Lilacmere are sleeping off the effects of their recent dissipation.

Unceasing are her efforts to secure a position of any kind, but all in vain. One day she meets on the street a famous actor, who once read to the elocution class at Hammer College, and who said at the time she had a great talent for the stage. She stops him and recalls the school and the meeting to his mind; he has a vague idea of having praised a pupil of his friend De Solla, and promises to do what he can for her and to introduce her to an old manager of his. A few weeks later she goes with one of Frohman's companies to make a tour of the South. The play is a very popular one, a society drama; she has the *ingénue* part, and if she is more of an actress and more suited to the title *rôle* than the leading lady that is the unavoidable misfortune of the leading lady. She thinks she owes it to the Carrolls, as her aunt would say, to resign her name and to sever all connection with her former friends except Marie and a very few. They are playing in Baltimore, and one morning as Viva is at breakfast a man she met at Fannie Bomar's wedding comes up to her and exclaims how delighted he is to see her.

"I fancy you are mistaking me for a friend," she says, looking at him blankly. "I think you do not know me. I am Miss Lee—Lillian Lee—of New York."

"Beg pardon," he stammers, "I thought you were Miss Van Velssler," and at the old familiar name an expression crosses her face that tells him that she is

Miss Van Velssler, but he is forced to retire. He takes a seat at the next table.

In a few moments she almost drops the glass of water she is raising to her lips—Will Harris enters. As she gives him her hand, she hurriedly says, for the benefit of the man behind her and the members of the troupe at the table with her, "How do you do? It is such a pleasure to meet some one who knows Lillian Lee. Twice to-day I have been mistaken for some young woman from the South, I think they said," and she lays a letter addressed to herself on the table, so he can understand.

"I understand. I saw you at the play last evening, and tried to get away from some friends I was with, to see you afterward, but could not until it was too late," he says in French. "I wanted to send you a message over the footlights, but feared it would make you nervous, so I determined to see you the first thing this morning. How have you been? Tell me all about yourself."

"I would if you were writing a sensational drama, but it would be a waste of time now. I'd rather hear about you. You have not changed much since—since I saw you last. Do you remember the last time I saw you, Will? The day we caught your train at Louisville," she says with a little quiver in her voice.

Then, because he fears she will break down in the public dining-room, he asks, in English, about Marie and mutual friends, to take her mind away from herself.

"That certainly was Miss Van Velssler. I wonder why she gave me the cut," says the man at the table behind her, as she goes out with Will.

"That is the girl who took the *ingénue* part on the

stage last evening," says the man breakfasting with him.

"Oh, is that it? Wonder who the stiff-looking customer is she received so gushingly."

Viva and Will go in an alcove shut off from the main parlor by lace curtains.

"It is so pleasant to see you again," she says after she has given him a brief sketch of her movements since he last saw her. "What a long time it seems, and what I haven't been through since then!" wearily. "But there is no use in depressing you with my woes. Where do you go from here, and what are you doing in Baltimore, any way?"

"I am ordered to report at Washington for instructions, and I have been down to Annapolis. I could not go, you know, for the funeral, and I wanted to visit Charlie's grave before I go on another cruise."

She turns and leans her arms on the back of her chair and bows her head upon them.

"I did not know, of course, where you were, but I knew that if you had known I was going you would have liked to send some flowers by me, so I took violets—you know you used to say in jest that violets suited his eyes and it was a pity that he could not always wear them even in the uniform, so he immediately formed a great admiration for them. Do you remember it was the anniversary of the day we met you for the first time at Riverside? Perhaps I would not have remembered it, but he reminded me of it so often and said it was the happiest day of his life."

She chokes back the sobs and raises her head suddenly. His hand is resting on the back of her chair; on

the third finger is his class ring. How sharply it recalls the day in the little frame chapel that her handsome sweetheart put one like it on her hand. She feels keenly that she did not care for him enough. How noble he was! She would like to inflict some punishment on herself for not loving him more. She leans forward and impulsively and humbly kisses the ring. Two scalding tears fall upon his hand. He is very much moved. He wishes she would not cry. He has a strong man's horror of seeing a woman in tears. He does not know how to console her, but gently touches her bowed head.

"Is it the ring that reminds you so of him? Where is yours?"

"I—it is gone." He thinks she means she has lost it.

"Do you want this one? Or may I have one made for you? It would be of great pleasure to be of such slight service to you."

"No, no; I do not want it," she says as plainly as she can; her voice is very choked. "Please do not think me rude, I hardly know what I am saying—but you understand, I'm sure."

She gets up and walks to the window. She cannot see out for the blinding tears that are in her eyes. Then she makes an effort to compose herself, and turning, with a sad smile and holding out her hands, says: "There, you will regret you ever saw me, if I continue to be so weak. If you go away this afternoon and I do not have another opportunity of seeing you, let me thank you now for all your kindness to me, and, believe me, your friendship is very sweet to me."

He presses her hands warmly without a word; holds

the curtains aside for her to pass; watches her rush past the staring chambermaid; then, with a sigh, turns to the window and gazes upon the rush and crowd and turmoil in the street below; and there are tears in his eyes which are no disgrace to his manhood.

In another part of the hotel, in the daintiest apartment in the house, is another daughter of the distinguished Carrols. Mrs. Van Haughton Livingston is returning by very slow stages from the Virginia springs. They bore her intensely, but she considers it the duty to her race to go there every few years.

"I am a Southerner, heart and soul," she said to a friend before leaving the springs this summer, "but Southern watering places, and especially Virginia ones, bore me, with their set rules and narrowmindedness. One hears the gossip she heard last year and the year before that, with a running comment of the scandals of the last fifty years. There is always some one in the crowd who was present at the scene in question—for instance, the Kenwood-Blake pow-wow, when Mrs. Kenwood, one of the leaders of the most exclusive set in Baltimore, who allowed a little popinjay not much older than her son to hold her parasol over her on the veranda and assist at her parties in her cottage, was made to leave the hotel at ——— Springs. The boy's old mother, who, by the way, was painfully religious, was envious and jealous that a woman so near her own age should wear gowns made in the latest fashion and be so popular with young people, and went, with her large following of relatives, children, and nurses, who came every summer to the springs, to the proprietor and told him if Mrs. Kenwood did not leave she and her set would. What

could a woman of refinement like Mrs. Kenwood do but leave quietly when told to? You may be sure the old woman, for all her religion, published her triumph far and wide, and the leading dailies came out with headlines which said, 'The Usual Scandal at —— Springs.' And at another place a young mother had a very sick child; the other women concluded it was whooping-cough, and went to the proprietor *en masse* and said if she did not leave on the evening train they would. She left—thoroughly indignant, it is true—and refused to pay her bill, and said she would have her husband, a very bright young lawyer, settle with them; but go she did. No, on the whole, I prefer Newport to Virginia. Of course Old Point is always charming, but that is different; and this is positively my last season here. I like to come occasionally, as the Carrols have always come here for the summer, but——”

Hildegarde Livingston is the eldest daughter of the late Robert Carrol, of Glenwood, South Carolina. At eighteen, before the family fortunes were at the *last* ebb, she went to visit a schoolmate in New York. She knew it was her last fling in the great world, that she would probably never have another such opportunity, and she determined to make the most of it. With youth, birth, and great beauty, she found things rather easier than she had dared to hope. Van Haughton Livingston, the multimillionaire, fell madly in love with her on sight. He was a dear old gentleman, with silky white hair, pink cheeks, the typical healthy color of a Northerner, and the kindest blue eyes. He always looked as if he was masquerading in nineteenth century clothes, and as if the lace ruffles and powdered hair of

several generations ago would suit his courtly and old-fashioned manner better. They were very happy, though he was December and she May. He trusted her implicitly, and she looked up to him and relied wholly upon his superior judgment. She deeply and sincerely mourned his death; but at last woke up to the fact that she was the richest widow in New York, and no one knew how to enjoy money better than Hildergarde Livingston. She always openly quarrelled with her first sister, and May—well, she used to be very fond of May, but she had no patience with her, the sister who threw away her chances in life so wantonly. Of course May's beauty was a kind of doll type, not the sort to bring down a Van Haughton Livingston; still there *were* men who went in for the Greuze and Watteau style, and she might have married very well. Yes, she believed there was a child, but after the death of her sister she lost sight altogether of Hugh Van Velssler and his daughter. She sits in her room to-day and congratulates herself that she has no charge to chaperon for the coming season. She has never had a child of her own, but year after year some friend comes forward with an old claim and begs her to chaperon his or her daughter, and Mrs. Livingston, who is an ideal, a born chaperon, promises, though she knows it will give her no end of trouble—only she stipulates for one thing, her charge must have beauty. Her greatest passion is love for the beautiful, and she refuses to have her feelings wrought up by sitting opposite an ugly girl at breakfast for a whole season. No, this year she is free, and can ask what men she pleases to her dinners without stopping to consider whether they are detrimental

or not. There is that scapegrace cousin of hers, Valentine Cross Carrol, of whom she is very fond, but she had to cut him nearly all last season because Katherine Mathews was so in love with him, and Katherine was obliged to make a good marriage. She glances over the society journals, which give a forecast of the season's gayeties, and decides she will go on to New York to-morrow. Then rising, she rings the bell to order a carriage, and putting on her long fur coat goes down to the entrance. As she is about to get in the carriage, she stops and looks at an old man coming slowly down the street. A silk handkerchief is wrapped about his throat, and his thin overcoat is drawn up as high as possible. The wind blows the gray hair from his thin face under his hat, and he puts up a blue-veined hand and pulls the brim closer over his eyes, breathing with difficulty the biting air. She looks at him through her lorgnette; surely even after all these years she could not forget that face. When he is opposite to her, she says:

"Reggie Vane, where did you come from?"

He stops, looks at her; then a pretty flush mounts to his dear old face. He lifts his broad-brim hat, marking him unmistakably a Southerner, and tremblingly takes the plump, well-gloved hand she holds out to him.

"Well, I see time has not improved your powers of speech," she says, almost impatiently.

Somehow her conscience always hurt her when she thought of Reggie Vane, as she called him, and the heartbreaking letter he wrote her when he heard she was going to marry the New York millionaire. How young and strong he was then, and how very much older

than she he seems now! Well, no doubt, this is what she would have come to if she had been as big a fool as her sister May.

"Get in and drive with me," she says. "You need not think you can escape me now. I am going to hear what all the good people in the neighborhood of Glenwood have been doing for the last thirty years."

"I did not think news of your old home would interest you," is all the mild reproof he offers as he obediently gets in and tucks the fur rug about her.

When she has thought very much about him, and now that she has looked into his worn, sweet, patient face again, she wonders if there is really more in this earth than "is dreamed of in her philosophy," viz., diamonds, carriages, horses, and a box at the opera. There is something about him that stirs her best impulses and makes her rather dread to look into his honest eyes.

How strange it is to hear about people she has almost forgotten, but she enjoys it all immensely; it is almost a new sensation.

After the drive Mrs. Livingston decides she would go to the theatre, and nothing will do but Judge Vane must occupy a seat in her box.

"I hope we will not be very much bored," she says as the curtain goes up. "Society plays are so often such absurd caricatures."

The first act is nearly over when Viva enters. Judge Vane looks at her; then again, to see if he can believe his eyes, drops his programme and Mrs. Livingston's opera-glass case, and clasps his hands together.

"It is Viva," he says, half rising from his seat; then

he grasps the glasses from Mrs. Livingston and tremblingly adjusts them to his eyes.

Mrs. Livingston looks at him half in amusement, half in disappointment. So he had another early romance, she thinks; or perhaps this young woman plays the part of heroine herself, she concludes, with all the Carrol suspicion.

"How like you she is, Hildegarde; the same droop of the shoulders, the same haughty poise of the head. I always thought so, but the resemblance is striking now. On the stage! Poor little Viva!"

Mrs. Livingston looks at him in well-bred surprise. It is not a love affair after all, then, only madness.

"Do you know the young woman?" she asks politely.

"She is Viva Van Velssler."

"Reggie Vane, what are you saying? May's daughter, my niece, a Carrol—how dreadful!" and she pales under her delicately applied rouge.

"I wondered why she had not written in so long—she was always such a good child about writing," he continues almost to himself.

Viva finished the scene; it is her best one. Just as she is about to leave the stage an usher hands over the wire a basket of pink roses. The college boy, who is her stage lover, steps forward and receives the basket and presents it to her with his best bow. Before she looks at the characteristic straight-up-and-down writing on the card, she knows it is from Will. She wonders if he did not get off this afternoon, after all, and if he is in the audience; she glances over the house, smiles and slightly bends her head, and disappears in the wings.

"Your *protégée* seems to have an admirer on this side

of the footlights," remarks Mrs. Livingston dryly, then droops her eyes when she reads the reproach in his.

"Help her, Hildegarde, as you say she is your niece and a Carrol, and the money you squander on flowers during a season would keep her in comfort. Take her out of this! She is young and beautiful, and you are woman of the world enough to know to what temptations she will be exposed. Of course I would not presume to ask you to let her live with you, but you have so much money and are pleased to subscribe large sums to fashionable charities, half of which would enable her to go abroad and study art. She has a great talent for that," and in such a strain he goes on and pleads Viva's cause, but under his eloquence there is a plaintive tone, as though he knows the hopelessness of trying to move her. Did he not try—oh, so hard, long ago—when his eyes were lighted with the fire and passion of youth, and his voice mellow and ringing with the earnestness of a great love? Perhaps it is because of that other failure which seems to haunt her to-night, just as he appears to be the ghost of that young lover, that she listens so well. The glittering opera-house, with its elegantly dressed women and men of fashion, fades from her sight. She wonders what her life would have been had she chosen that other way—well, surely she has nothing to complain of, if she has missed anything in this world she is only vaguely conscious of it.

"Go back and tell her to come to me after the play," she says.

"Thank God!" he answers, dropping his face in his hands.

It cost Mrs. Livingston a pretty penny to persuade the manager he could do without the services of Miss Lee for the rest of her engagement, but managers have their price as well as the rest of the world, and a week later sees Viva domiciled in the splendid pile of gray-stone on Fifth Avenue, New York, that Mrs. Livingston calls home.

CHAPTER XXI.

MRS. LIVINGSTON is very glad that she showed Reggie Vane she can be touched, and adopted this beautiful niece of hers; it will be better than leaving her immense wealth to a charity. And the girl will be such a credit to her—her other charges were nothing to her, after all, and the only interest she took in them was to have it said that under her chaperonage and management the most brilliant match of the season had been made. But, alas, they always disappointed her at the critical moment! There was Ella Hudson, who allowed Harry Ellsmere to slip through her fingers after people had begun to regard it as an understood thing and to congratulate her openly; and his marriage, which was almost an elopement, it was so sudden, with that designing widow at the end of the season was nothing short of disgraceful. The next year Ella was a dead failure, and showed by her looks and her carelessness in dress that she was pining for him, and consequently received absolutely no attention at all, and was sent home in disgrace. Then there was Tottie Hewit, who actually could have gotten old Van Martin, and whom the arch enemy Mrs. Cruger was wild to catch for Olive, and it would have settled old scores so satisfactorily to have captured the prize. But that hopeless Tottie eloped with her music teacher just before the last Patriarchs' ball, which was to have been the field upon which the Cruger faction was to be utterly routed.

And instead of starving, as she ought to be, and a lesson to other foolish girls, that irrepressible Tottie is living happily in a *bijou* little uptown flat, and her husband has just composed an opera which, they say, has created a stir in musical circles. And last year there was Katherine Mathews, who was such a goose about Valentine Carrol, and whom every one sympathized with so absurdly when she was made to marry old Stevens. Well, that "yes," which was almost a shriek, from the white, trembling lips of the bride at the altar, and the sight of the poor little creature, who fell in a dead faint, crushing her bridal finery, as soon as the ceremony was over, and who had to be carried out by the best man, since the groom was too feeble, rather disturbs Hildegarde Livingston's conscience sometimes. What a pow-wow there was in the clubs about it! Well, the chaperon did her duty—old Stevens was the highest bidder, and the gushing epistle, filled with protestations of everlasting gratitude, from the mother of the bride ought to have been enough to gratify the vanity of any chaperon. She will give Viva *carte blanche* to spend what money she pleases, and her taste seems to be good. Her only suggestion was not to fall into the way of so many Southern girls, and have her street gowns cut out in the neck. Anything but the highest collars and the plainest of tailor-made gowns for the street pains Mrs. Livingston beyond expression, and even causes her to experience actual indignation against the wearer. The little octagon room on the second floor, which has been used for a reading-room, she will give her for her own den, where her most intimate friends can be received, away from the publicity of the

lower drawing-rooms and the library. She will see what Viva's taste is in furnishing it—no expense shall be spared, certainly. Every girlish caprice shall be gratified—Mrs. Livingston never does anything half-way, and if it pleases her to squander a small fortune upon this new toy, who is to say her nay? She is passing the Union Club: there is Jack Montague going in. He is the cleverest cotillon leader in the swell set—just the man Viva must know. She has met very few people yet. Of course she must get accustomed to her new life first, and, all-important item, must have the proper gowns in which to appear as Mrs. Van Haughton Livingston's niece. She gives the cord a sudden pull and the carriage stops.

"Tell Mr. Montague I want to speak to him," she says through the tube to the footman, and he springs to the ground and succeeds in catching Mr. Montague just as the door is about to close behind him.

"How do you do?" says Mrs. Livingston, graciously, extending her hand. "I have been in town two weeks, and you have not been to see me?"

"I have not had an opportunity to do so yet, but I will avail myself of the pleasure very soon, you may be sure."

"Have you an engagement for to-night? If not come and dine with me and meet my niece, Miss Van Velssler," and Mrs. Livingston proceeds delicately to convey the idea that Viva's proper guardian has recently died and she has been in retirement, under Mrs. Livingston's protection, until now, when her mourning is laid aside and she is ready to be presented to society.

"He is going into the club and will spread it, and just

as well that report as any; and if I do not furnish them with one, they will manufacture one which probably will not suit me so well," she sagely concludes.

"It would be a pressing engagement indeed that would prevent me from dining with Mrs. Livingston. The pleasantest evenings of the season are spent at her house," he says, gallantly.

"Very well, we dine at eight, and will be alone," as she hurriedly dismisses him and draws back in the carriage. Not a dozen feet away is Valentine Carroll, and he must be made to understand that he has not the *entrée* to the magnificent house on Fifth Avenue this season. How handsome he looks, she thinks, as he lifts his hat and mockingly accepts his cut. Yes, it is too bad, but he would gain too easy a footing as Viva's cousin, she decides; and what woman thrown in close contact with Valentine Cross Carroll could resist his fascinations? She sighs when she thinks what a picture those two, Valentine and Viva, would make, and is almost tempted for art's sake to be false to her creeds and to smile upon their union, and divide her money between them. But no, Viva shall redeem her failures in the chaperoning line for past seasons, and—well, who knows but that she might catch *Underwood himself*, that target for matrimonial arrows for the last ten years. Viva need not marry an old man for his money; she need not marry at all for years; she can, with her beauty, position, and as heiress prospective to the Livingston millions—her fancy goes off into delicious flights.

"I say, fellows, what sort of a filly has my lady got up for sale this year?" says Valentine, entering the smoking-room of the club. "I thought she had sworn

off. She billed herself last year as 'positively her last appearance' in the *rôle* of chaperon."

"She ought to have retired on her laurels after the Mathews-Stevens marriage," says one of them, in disgust.

"This one must be something especial," continues Valentine, hurriedly. "If you could have seen the look with which she froze my young blood just now! It was the worst I ever got, and I think I am hardened to my lady's cuts. Have any of you seen the last article, and about what price will be affixed?"

"Jove! Wonder if it could have been the girl she had in the park with her yesterday? She *was* a beauty," says a man with his feet in the window.

"Here comes Montague—he can tell us about it," says Valentine, as he rings for a brandy and soda.

"Come, Montie, give us the news. What is my lady up to this year?" calls little Van Courtenay, using the name the fellows have given Mrs. Livingston on account of her *grande dame* manners and haughty bearing.

"I don't know, except that I am invited to dinner to-night to meet her niece and adopted daughter, who seems to have been left in her care, and who has just come out of mourning for her father or guardian or something, I did not quite catch what; and my lady is going to spare no pains to make her a howling success. If I like her looks, I'll ask her to lead the first of the Sherry dances with me."

Valentine gives a prolonged whistle.

"Are you sure she said her niece, Montie?" he asks. Mr. Montague nods his head, with a glass of seltzer raised to his lips. "Did you say the name is Van Vels-

sler? Oh, that must be my cousin, May Carrol's daughter," knitting his brows and trying to brush up his memory on the family history. "She ran away with an artist or something like that and the family kicked up a mischief of a row. So my lady has adopted the daughter; well, she will do the handsome thing by her."

"Yes, no doubt, until she grows tired of her," growls the man in the window. One would think he had a grudge against the most charming hostess in Gotham. Well, they *do* say he liked Katherine Stevens—but fudge, people will gossip, you know.

"Well, my friends, if any of you happen to meet my fair young kinswoman, please let her know that it is not lack of cousinly interest that I do not pay my respects to her, but because I am labelled detrimental and am warned 'hands off,' " as he saunters to the other end of the room, picks up a paper, and apparently loses himself in its pages. "Now, I would like to know the truth of this new move of my queenly cousin. I'd bet my new *coupé* that when she went South she did not remember the existence of this girl, for she took a most loving leave of me, and said she would be delightfully free this season, and that I could look upon her house as my headquarters, so to speak. Yet she tells Montague she has had the idea in view a long time. Thy ways are mysterious, oh, my cousin Hildegarde," he thinks.

"Val is in hard luck," says one of them. "As soon as he trains a young woman to dance decently and to carry on a conversation about something else than her *début* and her first gown with a tail, and makes her generally the fashion, and one begins not to shudder when one is told one has to take her to dinner, he has to va-

cate, for fear Miss Bud will become too much interested. Yes; then when Miss Bud's wedding is fully arranged, Val is sent for, forgiven, asked to assist at the wedding to give it tone and stop the gossips from connecting his name with the bride's, and is expected to come down handsomely with a wedding present, to show there are no hard feelings."

"Yet I'd give all I am worth to be Valentine Carrol," says Van Courtenay, casting an admiring glance at Val, whose superb figure is stretched out on a lounge, one hand supporting his handsome head.

"He *does* seem to play smash with the women. They go down before him provokingly easy. I tell you one thing, my boys, if ever I am insane enough to become a Benedict, for the sake of my domestic peace I'll take care to limit my courtesies to Valentine Carrol to club dinners," says Jack Montague as he tucks his arm in Van Courtenay's and takes him off for a stroll down Broadway.

Viva sits in the "den," which her aunt wisely left to her to furnish—and in all New York there is not a daintier boudoir. The walls are hung in pale-green satin brocade, with a silver thread running through it. Across the ceiling is painted a tangle of silver grape-vine, with countless, frolicking cupids playing hide-and-seek among the leaves. The panels of the doors are painted with her own brush—Cupids brewing a jar of love, and driving white swans over meadows of opal and rosy sky. The furniture is Louis XIV. style, and of white satinwood inlaid with old ivory, upholstered with the same brocade as the walls. In a space between the windows is an upright piano of white satinwood,

beside which stands a tall lamp of bright silver; opposite is a dainty writing-desk, with a litter of solid silver pens, tray, inkstand, paper-knife, a tiny silver lamp to melt her sealing-wax, and the countless pretty nothings that go to make up the writing paraphernalia of a dainty woman of fashion. In front of the desk is a Madame de Maintenon chair, the stiff, straight back of which is carved ivory, with a huge rose on the highest point, in the centre of which cuddles a shivering Cupid, with the ivory leaves pulled up about his dimpled legs. There is a low divan, upon and about which are piled a quantity of eiderdown pillows, with occasionally a pine one, to lend a fragrance. The floor is covered with white velvet carpet, through which runs a silver leaf. White bearskin rugs are scattered about. Everything in the apartment is gay, bright, and dainty; even the nymphs which support the white onyx mantel are standing on tiptoe and laughing, as though about to express their pleasure in assisting in such a dainty *ensemble*. On a table are a few of her favorite poems bound in white, and the picture of a man in the naval uniform in a silver frame.

"Are you here, Viva?" says Mrs. Livingston, pushing aside the heavy white *portières* and entering.

"Yes, I have been too deep in my book to think of dressing. Do you want me to go driving?" dragging forward an easy-chair for her before the pretty wood fire.

"No, I want to tell you about the dinner party I am going to send out invitations for—just a few guests to be invited. My plan of keeping you back these last weeks has been excellent. Jack Montague says that

when he is at the clubs he is actually mobbed and besieged with questions about you until he is exhausted. Now, I am inviting the men most desirable for you to know, and nearly all the girls are pretty. It will not be like the first Cruger dinner to Olive—all of the ugliest girls possible invited, to make Olive look well and make a good first impression; and she sent Olive out to dinner with Chester Underwood, as if a man like that would notice Olive, a silly butterfly girl, without an ounce of brains. He never noticed her afterward except in that cold, indifferent, yet perfectly courteous way of his when he met her. And after making such a decided set at him, it was annoying," with a smile at the humiliation of her old enemy. "Olive Cruger is the only girl who could be called homely I have asked—I have also written to Jack Montague, of course; Reginald Van Courtenay, and a few of the Knickerbocker men, and"—a slight hesitation—"Chester Underwood."

Viva gazes meditatively at the point of her white satin house-shoe, edged with swansdown. "Evidently Chester Underwood is the man," she thinks, sagely. Aloud she says: "Who is Mr. Underwood, auntie?"

"He is the Senator-elect from New York; goes in office in March. He is the most charming man I know"—"except that wretched Valentine," she adds mentally—"and the most indifferent. Nearly every girl of his acquaintance worships him in secret. It would take a very bold young woman indeed to break through that calm hauteur and flatter him to his face, and keep his photograph, which can be bought at the photographers', with the other public men, on her bureau. And a few

young women, a little more daring than the rest, have asked him to write his name on the bottom of the card, which he carelessly proceeded to do. He distinctly says he is not a marrying man and does not care for society—that is, for society's sake; he likes to go to the houses of his friends, but he intends to devote his life to politics. And he is that latter-day wonder, a man who has the interest of his country at heart, more than the consideration of the votes of his constituents. He has gained his enormous popularity step by step, by his steadfastness, worthiness, and statesmanship, and not by a sudden bound and burst of brilliant oratory which sweeps his hearers off their feet against their better judgment, and consequently he *will last*. He has gone to the United States Senate to stay until he gets tired of it. Every one knows I have not had an opportunity to entertain him since I chaperoned his box party given to his niece at the close of last season. I am sorry to claim him for dinner, but in view of the Cruger failure, and since he will be the most distinguished man present, he falls the legal prey of the hostess. In fact, I am asking the Crugers to show them how an affair of this kind should be conducted."

Viva laughs as she twists the cord on her morning-gown.

"The poor Crugers," she says. "Not knowing their awful crime, I can almost find it in my heart to feel sorry for them."

"I will take care to place you opposite him," thinks Mrs. Livingston. "Lily Cruger would have made the mistake of putting Olive beside him, if some one had told her he must go with her herself. So few women

know how to manage these delicate affairs is the reason they have old maids on their hands. There is no reason why every girl, no matter how homely, should not marry, when the men are as easily flattered and caught as they are. It only takes a little tact. This dinner will be an opening for her actual presentation to society at the first Patriarchs' ball on the twelfth of December. I think her judgment is as good as her taste; she listened very attentively about Underwood, and I need not have cut poor Valentine so entirely. I'll ask him to my crush later on, if everything goes well. There is no one I enjoy as much as I do Val. I actually pine to hear one of his delicious stories—oh, if he were not so dreadfully fascinating, what an assistance he could be to me at this dinner!"

It is the evening of Mrs. Livingston's dinner party. Already a few guests have arrived. Mrs. Cruger and her daughter were the first to come.

"Came early, to see what was going on! As if I did not have sense enough to mask my batteries, if she thought she could discover my tactics by watching," thinks Mrs. Livingston amusedly as she turns to welcome Mr. Van Courtenay, who is being announced.

Mrs. Livingston is looking her best to-night. She scents battle from afar and longs to enter the fray. Already the Cruger forces look crestfallen when they look on Viva's splendid young beauty. Hildegard Livingston always appears best when entertaining in her own home. Her gown is of rich purple velvet, cut out at the throat, which is the envy of half her girl acquaintances; her perfect hands and arms are bare to the elbow; her full gray hair is piled high on her aristo-

cratically poised head. She looks like a *bisque* marchioness, or as though made up for a *poudre tête*, with her white hair, young face and startlingly black brows. A huge diamond crescent gleams amidst the puffs of her hair. Viva is standing a little way off talking to Jack Montague. Her gown is of heavy white silk, about which is some silky fringe effect, which gives it a foamy appearance. She holds a bouquet of Parma violets in her hand. The short puffs, which answer for sleeves, would be trying to a less perfect arm. Her only jewel is a slender bracelet with a pearl heart for a clasp, which her intimate friends say she has never been known to take off. Ah, the critical moment has arrived! Mr. Underwood is announced. Mrs. Cruger pricks up her ears and almost pushes the man she is talking to out of the way to gain a place of vantage.

"How do you do, Mr. Underwood?" Mrs. Livingston says. "Your time is so much taken up I hardly hoped my note would find you disengaged for this evening," as he bows before her with unaffected grace.

"Mrs. Livingston's invitations are a pleasure which cannot be resigned easily," he says, and somehow the words do not seem like the usual conventionalities.

There is a gravity, a dignity, about him that tells one he does not condescend to pay the empty compliments that men of fashion scatter broadcast. He is tall, well built, and seems to have a wonderful reserve force about him that warns one not to be mistaken in the outward calm. His hair is dark brown and slightly gray at the temples and pushed back from the well-developed brow. His grave eyes are brown, and are mirrors which reflect his pure and perfect manhood. Mrs. Livingston looks

at him admiringly. No wonder the women go into a sort of hero worship of him, she thinks.

"Permit me to present you to my niece," she says, and advances a few paces toward Viva, who is still talking to Jack. "Viva, Mr. Underwood; my niece, Miss Van Velssler."

Viva lowers her bouquet from her lips, raises her eyes to his face, bows, and murmurs a polite nothing. Mrs. Livingston turns to speak to the last arrival. Pretty little Pearl Martain, quite a favorite of Mr. Underwood, strikes him on the arm with her fan.

"Am I not to be spoken to at all?" she says, with a pretty pout, and he turns and smiles in her upturned *piquante* face.

Viva, seeing he is engaged, continues her conversation with Jack as though the aspiration of every *débutante* for the last ten years has not just been presented to her, and is standing within easy call.

"Admirable!" thinks Mrs. Livingston, as she complacently waves her fan and listens to Mr. Van Courtenay's rhapsodies about Viva, as he hovers near, on the principle, "If not the rose, near her." "She has all the sense I credited her with," continues Mrs. Livingston, mentally. "Such a comfort to chaperon, for once, a girl who is such excellent form. What a sensation she will create! Jack Montague, an experienced clubman, is already her devoted friend; this little idiot," meaning Van Courtenay, "in love on sight, and never did I see such a look of interest and admiration in Underwood's eyes as when he looked at her."

Van Courtenay is made Mrs. Livingston's slave for life by being allowed to take Viva out to dinner. As

they go through the hall, Mrs. Cruger contrives to whisper to her daughter: "It is Van Courtenay, after all. Ask Underwood to be of our box party Thursday evening—take no refusal."

Mrs. Livingston outshines herself to-night. She has inherited the Carrol gift of repartee, and the brilliant young Senator-elect has to put forth his best mental efforts to keep up with her; and when Chester Underwood talks in that low musical voice of his on a subject so near his heart as politics, and to a listener as appreciative as Hildegarde Livingston, he could fascinate the sphinx. Viva leans forward once or twice and answers him, and he is surprised at the clearness and decision of her well-pointed remarks. Most young women, knowing his interest for politics, ask him, with pretty pleading, to tell them "all about it," and explain what he thinks on such a question, and listen with parted lips, understanding as much as if he had been talking Greek. This tall, beautiful girl with the wonderful eyes interests him strangely. Once or twice when Mrs. Livingston is making her most telling point, she finds his clear brown eyes fixed meditatively on Viva, who is allowing Mr. Van Courtenay to explain to her why the Princeton men defeated the Harvard football team this afternoon.

In the drawing-room afterward Viva goes to the piano, followed by Mr. Van Courtenay, who refuses to stir from her side. She plays exquisitely. To-night she does not use her music, but just allows herself to drift from her favorite parts of one piece to another, as a sort of accompaniment to her conversation. Mr. Underwood draws near the piano; she smiles, and her playing be-

comes more brilliant after that. She wonders herself why she drops the dreamy melody she is playing and dashes into one of Rubinstein's concertos. At last she turns on the stool and picks up her bouquet.

"It is too bad the most beautiful flowers there are cannot last a whole evening without fading," she says.

"Then violets are your favorite flowers?" says Mr. Van Courtenay, and he mentally makes a note of the fact, and inwardly vows her toilet-table shall not be without them as long as there is a violet to be had in New York.

"Yes, I am very fond of them; but I fear I will have to abandon the idea of wearing them—they fade too soon."

"What is recalled by faded flowers, save that they do not last?" murmurs Van Courtenay, whereupon Jack, who is talking to Miss Martain near by, puts up his glass and looks at him with surprise mingled with admiration.

"What a joke to tell the fellows! Van Courtenay actually risen to the heights of poetry! Who ever heard of his quoting from anything but 'The Sporting Life' before," thinks Jack, as he agrees with Miss Martain that the football game this afternoon was just too lovely for anything.

Mr. Underwood is the first to take his departure, pleading an engagement. He makes his adieu to Mrs. Livingston and then returns to Viva, who is still sitting at the piano.

"I want to thank you for your exquisite music as I say good evening to you, Miss Van Velssler," he says.

"Music is one of my greatest pleasures. Will you let

me come some afternoon when you are disengaged and enjoy another such treat?"

"I will be pleased to see you any afternoon—we are always at home on Thursdays. I enjoy playing for one who appreciates music; it is an inspiration."

He bows before her and reluctantly turns away. Van Courtenay sees that Underwood has made a hit on the music question, and immediately begs for another piece, "knowing no more about music than a rabbit," as Jack said afterward; but she rises and says she will not play any more to-night.

CHAPTER XXII.

AFTER the theatre the reading-rooms of the Union are almost filled. The Livingston dinner seems to be a general topic of interest. They are all curious to know what my lady is keeping her last *protegée* in the dark so completely for. Her charges are usually brought out with a flare of trumpets at the first of the season, to get a good start, and are entered for any stakes in sight. Jack is hailed with delight as he enters the room.

"Hello, Montie, come in and unburden yourself at once, and do not let us have to extract information from you piecemeal. As the little Martain girl says, 'Tell us all about it,'" calls out Travers.

"Was Underwood invited?" asks a man at the fireplace.

"As well ask if the gas was lighted, or if they served champagne! Of course Underwood was invited," growls the man who usually sits at the window, and who occupies his same place to-night, though the curtains are drawn and he faces the other way.

"Yes, Underwood was there; and if my lady has her claws spread for that game, they are cleverly hidden."

"Trust her for that," says the Growler. "There is nothing rank about her moves, *à la* Cruger; she is subtle, she is."

"Well," continues Jack, when one of them eager to

hear the rest has shut the Growler up, "little Van Courtenay is gone—completely bowled over at the first shot. Actually grew maudlin and quoted poetry, and I never heard him mention horse once."

"You don't say?" says Travers, after the laughter has subsided. "Ye gods, what a picture! Fancy Van quoting poetry! I'll never forgive my lady for depriving me of such a sight; no, never."

"Now, good people, I hope you will be able to restrain curiosity until the Patriarchs' ball, when Miss Van Velssler makes her formal *début*, and I prophesy for her the most brilliant success ever made by a young woman on her presentation to New York society," which remark is repeated by Travers in a *café* later in the evening, in the hearing of a society reporter, and is duly written up in the society sheet the next day; and coming from such a man as Jack Montague, Viva's success is assured. The lesser lights always follow Jack's lead.

A man was just on the point of entering when this conversation was taking place, but he stood for a second at the door and then turned away.

"Was that Valentine?" asked Travers.

"I did not see," says Jack, and the figure in the hall quickens his pace and disappears through the front door.

"Now, I'd give my head to know if that indifference was a piece of acting," thinks Jack as he idly knocks the billiard balls around; "if so, it was the cleverest thing in that line I ever witnessed. Fancy a young woman in her senses telling Chester Underwood, when he asks her if he may come some afternoon to hear her play, that her day is Thursday, when all the world is present, instead of naming an especial day in the near

future, and being not at home to any one else, and receiving him in a dim religious light, productive of sentiment, and in her most fetching gown. I wonder he did not fall on the floor from the sheer shock. I think this little matter will be worth the watching. My lady was human, after all, and could not help the little gleam of triumph in her eyes as she bade us good-night. Underwood the Invincible weakening at the preliminary skirmish—what a feather in her cap!”

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The large ballroom at Delmonico's is crowded with the fashionable set. The first Patriarchs' ball is in progress. The tiaras of the chaperons, who are as near the dancers as possible, gleam and flash in the brilliant light like a series of tiny rainbows, and are worth a kingdom. The gowns are superb, and will quite rack the brains of those young women, the society reporters, to describe. How crisp and fresh the tulles and laces look at the first ball of the season—just out of their Paris boxes. They are as beautiful as the illusions of the *débutantes*—will the one be as crushed and ruined as the other is soiled and crumpled at the end of the season? The committees have surpassed themselves—everything, from the decorations to the dainty dance-cards, is as perfect as wealth and excellent taste can make it. Life is seemingly a beautiful dream to those votaries of fashion as they whirl over the perfect floor. If there is a worm in the bud, it is carefully concealed amid the perfumed leaves.

Mrs. Livingston is standing at the lower end of the room; old Peter Van Dyke has just turned away from her to speak to one of the floor committee.

"Is my queenly cousin still disposed to banish her most faithful subject from the light of her presence, or will she condescend to forgive him for his unknown crime?" says Valentine Carrol, bowing his handsome head in mock humility.

Mrs. Livingston would forgive him almost any crime to-night, so handsome he looks in his evening dress, with a delicate spray of lilies of the valley in his button-hole. She thinks he is the most perfect type of manly beauty she ever saw.

"How do you do, Valentine? I am delighted to see you again. Where have you been lately? I did not see you during the chrysanthemum show at all."

"I have been in retirement, meditating on my misdeeds."

"If you had meditated on half of them, you would have been in retirement still," she answers.

"I must congratulate you upon the success your handsome niece has attained. She is perfect," he says, looking at Viva in admiration as she passes with her partner, and is stopped not far from them by Van Courtenay, who asks to see her dance-card. "That cloud of green tulle is just the thing for a woman with a gleam of red in her hair to wear. That tiny square revealing the white chest and the arch of the shoulders is bewitching. The contour of cheek, chin, throat, and shoulder is perfect."

"Do you really think so?" says Mrs. Livingston with evident delight, yet a trifle uneasily. "How handsome and mocking the wretch looks! What if he should take it into his head—but nonsense, Viva is possessed of all the Carrol sense. No danger of the women of the Carrol

family making fools of themselves, if the peccadilloes of the men *do* have to be glossed over and regarded with the eye of charity," she continues. "A compliment from the greatest *connoisseur* of feminine beauty in town cannot but be appreciated. Yes, her shoulders and well-rounded chin stamp her unmistakably a Carrol. Val, I have fancied sometimes I saw a resemblance to you."

He laughs a low, amused laugh.

"My dear cousin, before I was your slave; now I dedicate my life to you. Perhaps you would be pleased to know what that most indifferent of men to the charms of the fair sex said about her," stopping and looking at her wickedly, knowing she is sure he means Underwood, and that she is consumed with curiosity but determined not to show it.

"Yes? And who is that?" she asks as indifferently as possible.

"Dolly Wilmer fluttered up to Underwood in the punchroom just now, and bringing herself, with all her dazzling charms, rather startlingly near him, asked him who is the prettiest girl in the room, confident of his answer. But Underwood is more than human; he resisted the fairylike Dolly and said without hesitation, 'Miss Van Velssler.'"

Mrs. Livingston coughs behind her fan, and bows to the crowded end of the room, to avoid answering.

"Come and meet Viva," she says with sudden generosity. "You will find her as charming as she is beautiful. Viva, let me introduce to you our cousin, Valentine Carrol; you have heard me speak of him, I am sure," stopping Viva and Mr. Van Courtenay in the promenade.

Viva has a difficulty to repress a smile when she thinks

how Mrs. Livingston has spoken of her handsome young kinsman. She looks at him, sees the delight he takes in the situation, and impulsively gives him her hand; she is sure she will like him; she always gets along with people who have a keen sense of the ridiculous.

"We will be good friends, I am sure," she says.

"Is there room on your card for my name?" he asks, bending and taking up her programme, which is attached to her bouquet.

"I will make room for it," she says, drawing her pencil through a name.

Van Courtenay devoutly hopes it is not his dance she has sacrificed. She holds the card and shows Valentine the number; he is a trifle back of her, and as he bends his head to look at the card his dark mustache almost brushes the rose in her hair.

"The fifth; why that is this dance," she says.

He smiles and puts his arm about her and they whirl off, leaving Mrs. Livingston and Mr. Van Courtenay looking rather gloomily after them. Mrs. Livingston is greatly annoyed; it seems almost ominous her going off in that way, just as Chester Underwood has pushed his way through the crowd and was about to speak to her. Val is bending his head and saying something to Viva; she laughs and looks back at Mrs. Livingston as they turn in the waltz, and then they are lost to view in the crowd.

The chaperons lean toward each other and whisper behind their fans as the evening advances, and Chester Underwood, who does not dance himself, is seen beside Viva between almost every dance.

"Underwood is sidetracked," says Travers *sotto voce* to Jack Montague as they pass each other in the supper-room.

"Thanks for the implied compliment. An infant could not have been forgiven for not seeing that two weeks ago," says Jack as he guides his partner through the crush.

During the next few weeks Chester Underwood's trap is seen very often standing in front of the Livingston home. Mrs. Livingston is in a fever of delight, yet annoyed. What earthly bliss does not have its bitter leaven? Valentine Carrol is the thorn in her side. He is constantly with Viva, who never fails to make room for him beside her on a sofa, or when she is at the tea-table pouring Russian tea into dainty Sevres cups for the gay world on Thursday afternoon at Mrs. Livingston's "at homes." Sometimes Hildegard Livingston, watching them across the room, thinks there is an understanding between them. What a terror to mammas, chaperons, to say nothing of ancient husbands, that reprobate Valentine has been! Yet he can hardly be blamed, she thinks, for women falling in love with him. He does nothing but say the same pretty things hundreds of other men say without doing any harm; it is his fatal beauty and charm. How on earth Valentine Carrol lives in the style he does is a subject that society has long since grown tired of speculating over. A festive clubman said he draws his income straight from Mephisto, whose special agent he is; but possibly no one but Val and his friends the Jews know. Of course he knows it must end some day. Well, when that time comes, one's revolver is always convenient. That way is

sudden, and there is no danger of their dragging one back and forcing one to apologize to one's friends for the trouble one put them to; but now the world is his, and he means to get all the pleasure possible out of it that youth, beauty, position, and popularity can command.

It is the day of the Country Club meet. The grounds are filled with the gay cavalcade and the drags and coaches of those who have come to see them off. A great many of the festive huntsmen look very nervously at their restless steeds; and even the fact that "it is the correct thing to do, dontcher know," and that Poole is responsible for their pink coats and perfectly fitting trousers, does not compensate them for the awful dread that overtakes them when a fence is in sight. The women under a still greater excitement show it less, and laugh and chatter with a vivacity that would be considered bad form in their lesser sisters. Viva is on a splendid black horse. "I adore dark men and black horses," she has been heard to say. She looks well in the severe habit and silk hat. . . She bows to the party on Chester Underwood's coach; and as her horse is growing so restless, she lets him canter down the drive. Mr. Underwood is the victim of a sprained wrist, from the effects of a fall on the ice last week, and cannot follow the hounds to-day.

"How is *ma belle cousine*?" says Valentine, bringing his horse up beside her. "The question is just a force of habit; you are the picture of health and contentment."

"Contentment is too poor a word—I am never so near perfect happiness as when I am in the saddle. Isn't he in splendid form?" patting the neck of her hunter.

"What a farce these drag hunts are! I'll wager that there are not eight in this crowd to-day who follow because they like it, but because the rest of us do. It is so different at home. I always speak of South Carolina as home; it is the only one I ever knew. There we ride because we like it, and there is no 'dropping the foxes.' We scorn to hunt any but wild ones, and we think more of being in at the death and the run we are to have than we do of our saddles and habits and of sitting just according to the riding-master's directions. There is poor Mr. Van Courtenay pale with fright, and who would give a goodly part of his wealth if he were safe at home, but who is possessed of a fortitude worthy a better cause; and he will shut his teeth and hold on to his saddle, if he thinks no one is looking, and go at his fences blind, just to boast of 'the jolly run we had' to-morrow at the clubs."

"How do you do, Val?" says a brisk, invigorating voice behind them, and Tottie Hewit—Mrs. Gillette,—pulls up her horse.

"Mrs. Gillette, I can hardly believe my eyes. You have deserted your old haunts lately. I thought we had lost you."

"Not a bit of it." Then *sotto voce*, "Introduce me to the girl who is going to console my lady for my misdeeds and fiasco of two seasons ago."

"Mrs. Gillette, let me introduce to you my cousin, Miss Van Velssler."

"I am awfully glad to know you, Miss Van Velssler. I have really intended to do myself the pleasure of calling, even though my lady—oh, beg pardon! Val, you taught me that—Mrs. Livingston and I are not exactly

one," and Tottie removes her knee from the pommel of the saddle and leans her elbow upon it and laughs deliciously, evidently not repentant yet for her conduct. It is a pleasure to look at her: happiness is written on every line of her round, impudent little face.

"I wish you would come," says Viva. "And I am sure auntie would be pleased to see you, if you did disappoint her," she adds, with a laugh. "She has your picture on her table."

"Has she?" says Tottie, her eyes softening. "Poor Mrs. Livingston, it was not her fault. She just wanted to do her duty by Stockton Hewit's daughter, as she used to say. Val, will you ever forget the day she came into the library and saw you kiss my hand and heard you call me Tottie? Her face was a study! How she lectured me about you! I heard enough about you then, sir, to hang you. Oh, if she had known of the foul rebellion I had just told you I was about to be guilty of, and that you were giving me your best wishes," and Tottie goes off into another peal of laughter.

They are now very near the Underwood coach. Mrs. Stevens is on the box-seat with Mr. Travers, since the host is unable to drive to-day. How pale her poor little face grows as she sees the gay party below her! Viva, who has heard the story, looks up kindly; but Katherine bows very coldly to this beautiful cousin of Val's, and whom he is said to admire so much.

"Do not let Mr. Carrol give you a lead, Miss Van Velssler; he is the most reckless rider I know," says Mr. Underwood very earnestly, with almost a pleading look in his eyes.

"I am going to give him a lead," she says audaciously, and her conscience hurts her as she sees how uneasy he is for her safety. "If not too much trouble, oh, cousin mine, I'd like you to shorten my stirrup a trifle," she says to Val.

Mr. Underwood motions for his groom to get down and hold Valentine's horse. Viva removes her foot from the stirrup and holds aside her skirt, revealing a tiny Wellington boot with a silver spur. And if ever Chester Underwood was inclined to rail at fate it is now, when he thinks if it were not for that stupid fall of his he might be beside her and able to render her such services.

"They are off!" some one calls.

Viva pulls her hat over her eyes, settles herself well back in her saddle, and without a glance or thought for the occupants of the coach is off like a shot, her horse neck and neck with Valentine's. On they fly; it is glorious. There is a slight south wind and a dull sky—a day to bring joy to the huntsman's heart. Houses, trees, and fields fly past them as they gallop madly on. The others are soon left behind. Val, Viva, the master of the hounds, and a young Englishman are in the lead. A group of farmers cheer them as they pass, but the enthusiasm decreases as the trampled fields are viewed. Across the field ahead they can see the hounds, with lowered heads, protruding tongues, and drooping tails. They lose the scent for a moment, and howl with anger, and rush about among themselves; then, with a shout of triumph, take up the trail and are off again with greater speed. They inspire courage to the foam-flecked horses, who start forward with a wiggle to their hind legs that

would be disastrous to one who is not sure of his seat. Viva is a slight distance ahead of Val, and riding at a fence at the end of the field.

"Viva, don't take that fence! Stop!" he calls out. "It is six feet high if an inch, and with a very ugly drop beyond. Come this way; there is an opening."

"Do you hear that clear note of the leader? It means the end," she says as well as she can with her horse going at full speed. "Do you suppose I am going to miss it? Follow me! If you are afraid, I'll give you a lead."

He stretches himself out almost flat on the horse's back and tries to reach her bridle.

"Don't be an idiot, Val," and she lays her riding-crop against the panting sides of her horse and rides straight at the fence. Val can but follow her. He shuts his teeth as her horse rises, and wonders if he will ever see her alive again. Her horse lands with his hind feet in the ditch, and the prints his hoofs made in the slippery mud on the sides of it show the gallant effort he made to get up, and he finally succeeded; and, with an impatient shake of his head at the delay, is off again. Viva looks back a second and sees Val safely over, and a turn in the road brings her to the yelling pack, with only the young Englishman present.

"That was the most glorious run I have had since I left home. Just five-and-twenty minutes," he says, taking out his hunting-watch.

"Yes, it was splendid. And to think you wanted me to miss the best part of it," she says to Val as he comes up.

A few stragglers join them, and they go back to Mrs.

Stevens' country home for breakfast. The gossips note with delight how nervous the poor little hostess is; and once, when Val has just addressed her and she drops her wineglass, their pleasure knows no bounds. Viva's hunter has managed to lame himself after the run, and Chester Underwood, who left a seat vacant on his coach in hope of persuading her to return with him, offers her the place, which she gladly accepts, and sends her pet home with the groom. The gossips on the coach exchange glances as they see that Mr. Underwood, with great diplomacy, has made it convenient to leave the Livingston home last, dropping all the others first. When they turn into Fifth Avenue, there are only Viva, himself and Travers left. As they drive up to the Livingston place, Hildegard is just getting out of her *coupé*.

"What sort of a day did you have?" she asks when Mr. Underwood has assisted Viva to the ground.

"Splendid!" says Viva. "Such a pity Mr. Underwood had to miss it."

"How is the wrist?" Mrs. Livingston asks, with pretty solicitude.

"Improving, so I am told by my doctor; but very slowly, to my mind."

"Come in, all of you, and have some tea; you must be frozen."

Mr. Underwood accepts the invitation at once, but Mr. Travers pleads a pressing engagement. "Knew it was as much as my life was worth to go," he told a confidential chum afterward. So, with an apology for leaving him, Mr. Underwood turns his coach over to his friend and follows Mrs. Livingston and Viva into the house.

"Go up to my den, auntie, and as soon as I have removed my mud-stained habit, I'll be with you," says Viva as she disappears down the corridor.

Mrs. Livingston throws open her fur coat at the throat and goes upstairs, followed by Mr. Underwood. To her amazement and annoyance, upon entering Viva's boudoir she finds Valentine Carrol snugly ensconced amid the eiderdown cushions and looking as though he were confident of a warm welcome from the mistress of the apartment. Mrs. Livingston's greeting is a shade formal—not that he is disconcerted by it at all; but a close observer might notice that his lips twitch under the dark mustache, and he lowers his lids to conceal a gleam of mischief. He places a chair for her, removes her wraps, and rings for tea.

"Where did you drop from?" says Viva as she enters a few moments later, wearing a pretty, simple afternoon gown of green silk, and greeting him with undue *empressement*, considering she has seen him all day, Mrs. Livingston thinks impatiently. "Of course, since I come to think of it, you could reach town very much quicker than we on the coach, and having to call at so many places," Viva adds.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"OF course your highness may have been pleased to forget that I was invited this afternoon to help light the new tea-lamp, but nevertheless it is so," says Val, meekly.

"Oh, to be sure! What do you think of my new tea-kettle and lamp, Mr. Underwood?" pointing to a small statue of Will-o'-the-wisp in Pompeian bronze. The figure is standing on tiptoe, looking back and luring the follower on with the lamp he holds in his uplifted hand; the other hand is holding the teakettle over it.

"It is exquisite. We had been admiring it before you came down."

"Do you know, Val," says Viva, as she arranges the cups on a small table, with a lace cover over green silk, "you are just the touch of darkness my room needed. If I had had you here always, I would not have had to invest a whole month's allowance in that statue."

"Your words open up a new career before me—if the worst comes, I can lend myself on 'at home' days to the fair ones whose rooms are too glittering and need a sombre tone," he says, apparently lost in deep reflection.

Mrs. Livingston is greatly annoyed. She says with a deprecating smile: "These absurd children, being cousins, are told so often that they are alike that they always make it a point to pay each other ridiculous

compliments for fun—as being a good way to compliment themselves.”

Whereupon Val finds it necessary to stoop and pick up his napkin, to conceal his face.

“I think there is a resemblance between them,” says Mr. Underwood, looking from one to the other. “There is something about the slope of the shoulders and the carriage of the head that is alike,” and they both make him a bow of mock appreciation, making the resemblance all the stronger.

Mr. Underwood soon takes his departure, and Mrs. Livingston makes an excuse of getting a letter for him to mail to leave the room with him. She wants to ask him to join her party at the theatre to-morrow night, but somehow dares not do it with that handsome wretch opposite gloating over her little tricks.

“I am afraid I am done for,” says Val as the door closes. “I have not seen my lady look at me like that since the day she saw me kiss Tottie’s hand. Come and sit by me, Viva, and let me behold you, if it is for the last time. Ah, that is it. The red light of the fire is very becoming to you. What a consolation to the soul of woman must be that rustle, when she moves, when her gown is lined with silk!”

“Well, I never had my gowns lined with silk before, and yet I had the rustle any way.”

“You did? How?”

“Oh, do not expect me to give away the tricks of the trade. But I had to practice economy, I assure you, when I actually had to give up my beloved big scrawl and write smaller to save paper—talk not of poverty till you have had to economize in notepaper. Oh,

when I think what a change it is, and if I had had the money I now squander on a bouquet or my expenses for a week, I would have considered myself vulgarly rich. I think it must be all a dream. I fear to wake up and find myself a pauper again instead of this pampered princess," flinging her beautiful arms up and clasping her hands on the back of her chair. "If you could have seen poor old Judge Vane when he came behind the scenes that night—dear old man, I suppose it was the first time he was ever in a greenroom in his life! The sceneshifters pushed him about, and he stood looking timidly around, expecting to see, no doubt, evidences of the most flagrant vice. And I have not regretted that night, I assure you. I find the bread of charity very palatable indeed."

"She is as heartless as all the Carrol women," he thinks. "A beautiful snowdrop crusted with ice—yet I have seen a gleam of fire in her eyes at times. The Carrol women are capable of two emotions—anger and wounded pride; yet that she can feel sympathy is one secret of her belleship; I wonder if——"

Mrs. Livingston comes in and cuts short his cogitations.

A few weeks later, just after the charity ball, at her cotillon dinner, Mrs. Livingston announces the engagement of her niece, Miss Van Velssler, to Mr. Chester Underwood. All society, especially clubdom, is startled. Of course they have seen it all along. But still to know that Underwood—the man who has successfully evaded the wiles of the fair sex for so long; the man who was distinctly not a marrying man; the man who was going to devote his life to politics—is actually caught

at last, the engagement really announced, is a shock to them. When may not their own time come? they ask each with a shudder. Yes, it was one afternoon when she was driving in the park, and he met her and asked her to let him occupy the seat beside her, and she laughingly said she would be very glad to, as her horse was in a very bad temper. When she offered to put him out near his club, he begged for a cup of tea, and it was then, under the light shed by the Will-o'-the-wisp, that he asked her to be his wife. She had thrown her wraps on a chair and was removing her gloves, her face averted. He took her silence as a bad omen and begged her not to answer him then, but to wait and tell him in a week.

"I had rather answer you now," she said, still with her face hidden from his sight, and he feared the worst.

"No, do not," he said. "Try to see if you cannot learn to care for me; but do not say no to me now—I cannot bear it. You see, I could not help having some hope."

Then she turned a radiant face to him and stretched out her hands, with the pink palms up.

"Have you no vanity at all? Can you not see that I care for you now?"

And he knelt at her feet, taking the little hands in his and buried his face in them.

.
Mrs. Livingston sits in Viva's den. Her hands hover over a piece of point lace in which she is apparently intensely interested, but Tottie, Katherine, and numerous other charges could testify that that identical piece of lace has been in progress for ages. She holds

old-fashioned notions on the subject of fancy-work, and thinks it becoming for women of her generation to embroider, and to be prettily shocked at the tennis, fencing, and hunting with which the young women of the present day occupy their time apart from the principal work of society—the ballroom—and the necessary time for resting after the fatigue of dissipation. Viva is reading aloud one of Kipling's short stories, while Chester Underwood sits near her and rests his eyes lovingly on her face. She reads remarkably well, and without the drawl and painful sounding of the final letter "s" and "t" that most young women with elocutionary tendencies affect. The story is "In the Pride of His Youth." Her voice is a trifle unsteady as she closes the book.

"It is very sad, very pitiful," was her comment.

"I do not agree with you," he says. "I admire Kipling very much indeed. There is such a dash and such an unaffected simplicity about his stories, and humor and pathos are so cleverly mixed, that one hardly knows which emotion to yield to; but I do not like this story. I have no patience with or sympathy for any one who could by any combination of circumstances consent to be led into a secret marriage. It is a deception,—a *crime*, in fact,—I could never forgive. I express myself rather emphatically, perhaps; but I feel very strongly upon the subject."

Viva drops the book to the floor and holds her fire-screen to her face. The book is a birthday present Jack Montague sent last evening, bound in white leather to match her other volumes, and with her monogram nearly the length of the book in sterling silver. "I did not intend to have another anniversary of my birthday.

But Mr. Montague found out from auntie that I used to recognize this day, and sent this, so I had to acknowledge it; and consequently I am a year older than I would have been," she told Chester when she showed it to him to-day.

Mrs. Livingston looks up from her lace. "All great men have a fad," she says, with a laugh. "Who was it who could not make a telling speech unless he twisted a certain button on his coat? And the opposition took a mean advantage of him and cut that button off one day when there was an important question before the House upon which he intended to speak. He fumbled helplessly for his button, with his ideas in total chaos, and the bill went over, all on account of the loss of the button. Then there was the distinguished Southerner, whose absence from the White House was noticed and commented upon, and it was discovered he preferred paying his respects to the President in the evening for a quiet chat, but avoided the formal functions because he refused to wear the conventional evening dress. It will go down to history that the brilliant young Senator from New York refused to secure an appointment for any man who had been secretly married, no matter what urgent reason made it necessary that his nuptials be concealed from the world for a time."

Mr. Underwood scarcely hears her; he is looking at Viva, who has grown very pale and is leaning back in her chair as if she were going to faint.

"Are you ill?" he says, rising and going to her and taking her hand in his. "Why are you so pale, dear?"

"I am not ill—perhaps a little tired. If you had had Mr. Van Courtenay for a partner for the cotillon last

evening, you would be tired too," she says, making a great effort to be unconcerned.

He sees that she does not want attention attracted to her looks, so changes the subject.

"Whose is the photograph that you honor by its being the only one in your favorite room?" he says, going up to the table and taking up the picture. "I have always intended to ask you."

"That is a young naval officer—though you see it was taken when he was a cadet and officer of the day—Will Harris, and the most perfect character I ever knew."

"Nonsense, Viva; you express yourself like a school-girl. You do not know him very well, and you never hear from him," says Mrs. Livingston impatiently. "What an idiot the girl is! Most men do not like to hear a girl rave over army or navy officers, and if Chester Underwood were like most men he would be furiously jealous," she thinks. He sees the drift of Mrs. Livingston's remarks and is intensely amused. He knows so much better than this worldly old woman, with her wornout tricks, can tell him, that Viva loves him truly, not for his wealth or position, but for himself. He has looked into the depths of her pure woman's soul and has read what he wished to know and is content.

"No, I never hear from Will," Viva says, "because he hates letter-writing; but if I were in trouble, I know of no one I would rather call upon than I would upon him."

"He has a very fine face," says her *fiancé*, putting the picture back on the table.

Viva is very quiet after that; she longs to be alone. She never thought that foolish marriage would confront her at this stage in her life. She had grown to look

upon it as something that would never be revealed for she had kept silent so long for his sake when his name and his relatives might have been a protection and an assistance to her, and it would be hard to have to tell the secret now, when it might do her harm—ay, might ruin her life. She tries to remember all Chester said about it, but fears to ask him.

“You are not looking well, Viva,” he says, bending over her with loving care. “I fear I will have to rob the season of its most popular belle, and put a stop to some of these balls and parties if they are going to tire you like this.” She looks up and smiles, but does not trust herself to speak. “I must leave you now, and you are to rest and not to see any one between this and Mrs. Thornton’s box-party to-night; and if you are not looking your old self by that time, I give you fair warning that I will bring you home after the first act,” he says, with sweet tyranny.

“I will be all right after a rest, I assure you,” she says lightly, forcing herself to look into his grave eyes, bent so searchingly and anxiously on her face.

After he is gone she goes to her room and, lowering the shades, throws herself on the bed. Rest! She feels as though she will never rest again. She tosses about, and her brain is on fire. Did he really mean what he said? Is his love so light a thing that he could give her up for this? “It is a deception—a *crime*, in fact—I could never forgive,” she seems to hear him say, and she knows he is not a man to use an exaggerated form of speech. What must she do? Tell him and risk the consequences? She does not dare. Suddenly she gets up and looks into her mirror anxiously. Her face is

drawn and hard; she looks worn and older than she thought she could possibly look for years. She rings the bell and sends her maid for some chloral, telling her not to mention the matter to Mrs. Livingston, as she might suggest a course of medicine instead.

"Oh, they all come to it in ze end," says Fanchette, with a knowing nod of her cap bristling with French bows, as she slips the money in the tiny pocket of her apron and trips away.

The rest the drug brings is delightful, and she looks thoroughly refreshed when she is dressed for the theatre.

"Yes, zey are always pleased with ze effects at first," thinks Fanchette, as she puts the long white-fur opera-cloak upon her mistress.

At the theatre door Mrs. Livingston and Viva are met by Valentine Carrol and Claire Thornton, who seizes Viva's hand and shakes it warmly. Claire prides herself on that handshake she has practised on her brother, and thinks she has about reached perfection in it.

"How do you do, my dear?" she says. "I have wanted to see you ever since I arrived from the South last week and heard you were here. Do you keep up with any of the Lilacmere people?"

"I always hear from Mrs. Guthrie; the others were just pleasant acquaintances."

They pass into the lobby, and find Chester Underwood waiting there for them. He comes forward and, after speaking to the others, draws Viva's hand through his arm.

"Well, not a single compliment, after I took all that trouble to be allowed to sit through the whole play?"

she says gayly. Those dark thoughts were thrown off with her dressing gown; they can have no place in this gay scene, with its lights, music, perfume, and beautifully dressed women. She hears gay bits of conversation as they pass to the box, and, standing beside her lover, with her hand pressed against his arm, she forgets all else.

"You look as beautiful as a dream," he says, and she laughs happily.

A dark figure brushes against her, and her opera-cloak blows back and clings to the heavy-stuff gown of the veiled woman beside her. The woman throws the cloak aside with great force. Viva turns and looks haughtily and inquiringly at her, but she draws back and is lost in the crowd.

When they are in the box and have settled themselves and adjusted their glasses, Val claims the attention of Mrs. Thornton, and converses with her in a low tone. Viva regards them amusedly; for once, she thinks, the fascinating Val has met his match. Then she turns to hear what Mr. Underwood is saying to her. Mrs. Livingston, like the proper-minded chaperon she is, finds herself intensely interested in the occupants of the boxes opposite and the fast-filling parquet below. The play is rather a sensational one. Claire considers it a bore, and leans back behind the silken hangings and talks in a whisper behind her fan to Val. Strangely enough, the play is the story of a secret marriage. It is the story of a young woman who is a governess in the family of an old nobleman. The eldest son is in love with her, but the young stepmother fancies him herself and sets the father against the governess. The

son is about to go away for a long time and persuades her to marry him secretly just as he is leaving, but makes her swear not to reveal it till he gives her permission, for it will ruin him with his father. On this same morning the family jewels are stolen. After the young husband is gone the stepmother accuses the governess of having taken them; and the wedding ring of the old lord's first wife, which was placed on her hand at the altar that morning, is found in her possession, and she is unable to give an account of it. She goes through trials and tribulations, but the mystery is finally cleared up: the son returns and is forgiven by his father; the stepmother is proved the guilty one and kindly dies, leaving all peace and happiness behind her. Between the acts Viva discusses again the matter of secret marriages with her *fiancé*, and grows more miserable with each word he speaks. He has allowed the idea to take tenacious hold of his mind, and, as great men do sometimes, holds determinedly to an opinion on a trifling subject.

"What stuff!" says Claire as the curtain goes down on the last act. "Can any of you ever forgive me for making you sit through such a thing?"

"The actors were very good. It is only the bad effect such a play might have on sentimental young people who consider secret marriages romantic. Instead of ending it happily, they ought to have been punished for their stupidity and deception," says Mr. Underwood, in disgust. He picks up Viva's opera wrap to put it about her, but she takes it from him; she knows she will have to look into his eyes as he fastens the clasps. He trusts her, and understands her so well that he does not seek

to know why she turns away, as a weaker-minded man might have done; but knows it is her wish, and glances over the house till she is ready.

"The idea of coquetting with a man like that!" thinks Mrs. Livingston uneasily as she sees it. "She has taken leave of her senses, and she will find some day that she has gone too far. Those calm, self-contained men never warn one to desist, but suddenly overwhelm one with their wrath, like the eruption of a volcano. If she should provoke him to—" but she shudders at the thought! What would the Crugers say, those foes who have been so utterly routed?

Viva spends the most miserable night she ever experienced, and falls into a heavy, troubled sleep toward day. Her maid comes to her room several times the next morning before she wakes; when she does open her eyes, there is a dull sense of trouble hanging over her, and she has to sit up in bed and think what it is. Then it all rushes over her, and she falls back miserably among her pillows. Fanchette enters on tiptoe; then, seeing she is awake, says, with her quaint, pleasing accent:

"Smith says zare is a young person downstairs who desires to see mademoiselle especially; she has been here before to-day."

"Tell her it is impossible—I cannot see any one before noon to-day. And close those blinds, Fanchette, and do not let me be disturbed."

"Will mademoiselle pardon, but ze young lady say if I give ze note she will be receive," handing her a pencilled note, Fanchette says, as she returns after a few moments.

"Please bestow a few moments of your, no doubt, valuable time on me. I desire to see you on important business. Lucy Cockerill," she reads.

For a second she is at a loss to know who Lucy Cockerill is; then laughs as she thinks how infuriated the underteacher of Hammer College would be if she could know it.

"You may bring me a dressing-gown, Fanchette, and ask Miss Cockerill to come to my sitting-room," and she twists her long hair up, slips on the white eider-down dressing-gown and goes into the next room, a pretty little affair in gray tones.

"You will pardon my sending for you to come up," she says as Miss Cockerill enters; "but I thought perhaps you would prefer it to being kept waiting. Will you be seated?"

Miss Cockerill does not speak, but looks at her gloatingly, as a tiger might, before springing upon the prey she is sure cannot escape her. Viva is a trifle disconcerted at the manner of her guest; it is peculiar in the extreme, she thinks.

"I believe I am speaking to Mrs. Carlyle?" Miss Cockerill finally says. Viva gazes at her blankly.

"I do not understand you," she murmurs.

"Well, of course you know best whether you have a right to the name or not. I hope you will be able to prove that you have. Ah, my haughty one, the day has come when you and I can have a reckoning. I have waited so long for this, but it is not robbed of its sweetness for that. For every haughty look, for every make-fun remark you and your friends made me suffer at Hammer, I will now make return with interest. Did you

ever realize how I hated you? Oh, I have managed to keep up with you through most of your career, and when you went on the stage I regretted it deeply; it was not that kind of humiliation I wanted to see you bow to. I wanted you to owe the bitterness of your life to me, as I have you to thank for mine. I knew that you would carry your pauper head as high as ever, and I would never have an opportunity of pointing the finger of scorn at you through any temptation the stage might bring you. And when Mrs. Livingston adopted you, I feared I would never be able to settle my little score with you. When your engagement to the wealthy Senator-elect was announced, I thought there was no such thing as justice in the world. I had just come from his death-bed then—Adrian De Solla's. You broke his heart. For the love you threw away I would have bartered my hope of heaven. That made me hate you all the more. You can never imagine the poverty he died in, or the wretched little garret in a third-rate boarding-house, where I found him ill and without friends, with his money long since gone. He would have starved if it had not been for me. I gave up my situation and nursed him for weeks, and after the long fever was broken and he opened his eyes at the last, conscious, and I bent over him, he did not seem to remember me, but said, 'Go away, you are not Viva; I want Viva.' Oh, God, do not talk of hate, Viva Van Velssler, till you experience a moment like that! After all my tender care and patience your name was the last word he spoke. I saw your party arrive at the theatre last evening, and from the way you greeted the dark man I thought he was the Senator-elect, and my heart

failed me. I saw he was too cynical to care for you really, and was marrying you for your position or money, and nothing I might say would change him. But you people of the great world have, it seems, a strange way of exchanging civilities; and when I followed you into the theatre, from the way you met Mr. Underwood, from the way you looked up into his eyes and from his whispered speech, I saw that I had been mistaken, that he was the man. I soon made assurance doubly sure, and asked an usher near—such prominent people are easily tracked, you see. I paid the greater part of my savings for the box next to you, and I heard your conversation between the acts. He despises secret marriages. And you were either secretly married to Cadet Carlyle when you were in Louisville during the Easter holidays, the last year of your school days, for he registered at the Willard Hotel as Charles Carlyle and wife, or—” she stops and looks at Viva, who sits drawn up in her chair, shivering.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"POSSIBLY this will help you to remember the day, if you need a reminder," Miss Cockerill continues, tossing her a white glove. "He dropped that as he got out of the carriage. It has been a perfect talisman to me. When I have been worn and despairing, I have taken it out and thought of this day, when I could throw it in your face and injure you."

"Why did you not tell what you knew when I first returned to school?" Viva asks. Her throat is dry and her voice sounds husky.

"Because I knew it could not hurt you then; he could come forward and marry you openly. I could see no reason why he should not, except that you wanted to receive your diploma, and I knew I could keep you out of that."

"It was against the regulations of the navy," Viva says mechanically.

"Well, I am glad I did not know it, for if I could have hurt you by ruining his career I would have done so, and then I would have been denied this more glorious revenge. You love this Senator more than you ever could have loved that boy, and I had rather strike you through him. Now, I am going to tell him what I know, and leave it to you to answer him as to whether you were Charlie Carlyle's wife or not when he registered you as such. Go on and beg for mercy."

"You are very much mistaken if you think I will do that," says Viva, rising, and with the old haughty light Miss Cockerill hated so in her eyes. "I come of a race who do not beg for mercy. I would like to know, however, exactly what you intend to do, and when I may expect the tragic little scene you intend to treat us to. In plain words, when do you intend to put the finishing touches to the clever little plot, which savors of chicanery worthy a better cause?"

"You die game, 'my fair one'—as I have heard Jen Miller and your friends call me often; but I fancy you are more troubled than you let on. Well, I will give you one week, and during those seven days I fancy your frame of mind will not be enviable. I prefer making the suspense long drawn out."

"That is sufficient. I understand. Fanchette," to the maid who has come in answer to her ring, "show this lady downstairs and I am not 'at home' to her in the future." She remains standing, and slightly bends her head as Miss Cockerill passes her, consumed with rage. When she is alone, she locks the door, and clasping her hands behind her head stands in the middle of the floor, silent and numbed. The reaction will begin presently. She picks up the white glove and mechanically straightens it out. She remembers so well seeing him thrust it in his breastpocket as they got out of the carriage that day in Louisville. That was the last time she saw him. How gay he was, and how he teased the sedate Will! How different would have been her life if he had lived! She puts the glove on a table and throws herself face downward on the floor. What must she do? Will Chester really give her up when he hears

it? What will Mrs. Livingston say? She will never forgive her, that is sure. The moments pass, and she can form no plan of action. It is awful. She walks aimlessly and distractedly about the room. Finally her eye falls upon a silver paper-weight made in the shape of an anchor, the gift of Will Harris. Of course there is Will. He can help her, advise her—why did she not think of him at first? If she could only see him! She must find out where a letter or a telegram will reach him—but how, with only one short week to do it in? She sits down at her desk and hastily writes a note.

“DEAR VAL:—I want to see you particularly. Will drive past the Union this afternoon at three. Be there, and saunter out and join me. If I should miss you, come this evening; will be at home before the Pember-ton cotillon dinner. Do not mention to auntie that I have written.

“Yours cordially,

“VIVA VAN VELSSLER.”

She seals it, marks it “important,” rings for her maid, and tells her to dispatch it at once. Then follows a weary hour of waiting. Good heavens, what will the seven days be, if she has only passed three hours since Miss Cockerill left!

Mr. Valentine Carrol is just opening his handsome eyes to the garish light of day when his man hands him Viva's note. He props himself up in bed with his pillows and rests his head on his arm, from which falls his sleeve of pink silk.

He gave a prolonged whistle as he finished the note.

“What can my fair cousin be up to now? Note shows, evidently, it was written under a nervous strain.

That about 'do not mention to auntie' is clumsy and not like our tactful Viva. If any more of my lady's *protégées* make me their confidant and elope at the end of the season, she will sue me for damages. Thomas, paper and ink."

"DEAR VIVA," he writes, "I will be at the Union from three to four; and if you should be detained or prevented from coming, will show up at your place immediately after dinner this evening. It will give me great pleasure to be of any possible service to you.

"Yours very truly,

"VALENTINE CROSS CARROL."

All day Viva is in a fever of excitement to know if she can dispose of her aunt for the afternoon or not, and with great diplomacy—she has a morbid idea that all her movements must be made with the utmost secrecy—she finds out that Mrs. Livingston will be engaged with the Waifs' Mission, her latest fad. Viva orders the victoria, her aunt preferring a more closed carriage, and at three starts out, telling the coachman to drive by the Union Club. How the little street arabs look after her and envy her as she rolls rapidly by, in a gray gown covered with some feathery gray trimming as soft as the cygnet's down! A large picture hat, with gray and white plumes, is tilted over her eyes; her long, fluffy, white and gray feather boa sweeps out over the gray velvet laprobe. She looks as if she were representing the white and gray winter afternoon. On her tiny muff is pinned a bunch of fragrant violets. Yet no one need envy Viva Van Velssler as she drives in her perfectly appointed victoria on this crisp winter afternoon. Perhaps, after all, it is best to be content

with one's own lot in life. Who knows what sort of a skeleton our apparently happy neighbor's closet may harbor? As she drives through Madison Square there is quite a stream of carriages, and a man crossing Broadway has to wait for a moment for them to pass. Her carriage is stopped by a policeman to let a line of waiting cars have the right of way. She looks up, to see Denton Overton standing almost beside her. She remembers having seen in the morning paper he is in the city for a few days, having left his wife and her mother abroad. There is a disagreeable, cynical look in his eyes as he lifts his hat to her. She bows coldly, and is glad he does not attempt to speak to her. She wonders bitterly why it is that whenever a particularly disagreeable event in her life happens he is sure to be on the spot—no wonder she almost hates him. As she reaches the club and turns into 21st street, Mr. Carrol is carelessly sauntering down the steps. He has seen her coming from one of the windows. He signals the coachman to stop.

"I am glad to see you on time," she says, pushing the robe aside for him to sit beside her. Then, without any pretence at indifference, she goes straight to the point.

"Val, do you know any of the officers at the Brooklyn navy-yard?"

"I have met one or two of them."

"Well, I want you to develop a sudden interest in some of them and call upon them this evening."

Mr. Carrol opens his great, sleepy eyes in astonishment. He does not remember to have heard there is insanity in the family, though, of course, that may

have come from the Van Velsslers—he believes there is some saying about genius and insanity going hand in hand. That he should be dragged out of bed at an unearthly hour to read a note from her and be met with all this show of secrecy, only to be told to call on some fellows she does not know and he has hardly met, *is* rather astonishing.

“I want you to find out the present address of Ensign William Harris; it is important that I should know it at once. I could find out, of course, by writing to the department, but I do not care to do that; besides, it would lose time. But at the yard, through some of the young officers who possibly know him, or from the last ‘Naval Register,’ you could get me the information at once. Now, throw over the Pemberton cotillon affair this evening—you do not care for it really, I know—and do my commission instead,” she says very earnestly, laying her hand on his arm.

“It will give me great pleasure to do your bidding, *ma belle cousine*; and I must say that any fellow in the club would envy that lucky dog, that you take such an interest in him.”

“I will be at the Arnold tea to-morrow at four,” she says, paying no attention to his compliments. “You have cards, I believe; be sure to go and have the address and full information *written out* on a small piece of paper, which I can put in my glove, as I might get it wrong.”

“I understand and will follow your directions exactly,” looking at her curiously. “What the mischief is she up to?” he wonders.

She seems to breathe freer now that it is all settled,

and her eyes lose their exaggerated brilliancy. He sees that if there is any pretence at conversation he must be responsible for it, so he chatters away, talking "society chopsticks," as he says, and does not require her to reply.

"There comes Katherine Stevens, walking and alone," he says. "I am going to get out here, and will ask you to drive with her instead. The gossips have been connecting my name with hers very much lately. I had to knock a young cub down at the club last night for what he considered a compliment to my powers of conquest and which was an insult to her womanhood. I fancy it is not likely to get out, as he will hardly mention it, and there was no one else by; but it would put a stop to all gossip at once if you drive the length of fashionable Broadway with her this afternoon."

Viva frowns. She has no desire to uphold the tottering reputation of any woman who is foolish enough to get herself talked about. It is so easy to be good, thinks this proud, haughty daughter of the Carrols, and she has no patience with imprudence in any form.

"Do the gossips do her an injustice?" she asks, coldly.

"My dear girl, I am sorry I cannot say much for the morals of the men of our family, but their redeeming feature is the careful way they guard their sisters and wives. Like all reckless, dissipated men, they have a higher standard for and are more exacting of their women than many better men. You are my cousin—need I say any more?"

"Certainly not. I will do as you wish."

The carriage is stopped; he gets out and, going up to

Mrs. Stevens, lifts his hat, speaks to her, and leads her toward Viva.

"I have made Val get out so I may offer you the place. Won't you drive with me, Mrs. Stevens? Very commendable in you to set us the example of taking exercise, but you must have had enough of it by this time, and I can take no refusal."

Mrs. Stevens does not want to go. She does not like Viva, and has a childish notion that she wants to do just the opposite of what Val wants her to do; but she is too weak to fight against such veterans, and after a time yields. Val assists her in, tucks the robe about her, and lifts his hat as they drive off, with the softest expression in his eyes that Viva has ever seen there.

The next afternoon at the Arnold tea Viva and Claire are surrounded by a group of admirers. From the way Viva's eyes brighten and she hands her cup to Jack Montague, who is beside her, that gentleman thinks Underwood must have arrived. Much to his astonishment, on turning around he sees Valentine.

"Oho! this begins to look serious," thinks Jack, and his wonder increases as he sees her turn aside eagerly with Val, who whispers something to her and gives her a note, which she puts in her glove. "My *last* illusion is gone. Who would have thought it? Even unto this last?" And all Claire's wiles are not sufficient to draw him to her side. "They would deceive the devil himself," he thinks as he retreats to a doorway.

"Did you find out?" says Viva, not trying to conceal how anxious she is.

"Yes. He has been sent on a special commission to Paris—something about the naval observatory there, I

believe—and sails from England to-day. Got it from a man who knows him, and also saw it in the *Army and Navy Journal*. Here is the full address, with the newspaper clipping enclosed," giving her the folded tiny note.

"Thank you; you are very good to take so much trouble," she says, growing very faint. But she makes a desperate effort to keep up a chatter with Mr. Travers, who floats up and attaches himself to her, and with that "armor which the Spartans call heroism, the Stoics philosophy, and we simply style good-breeding," she manages to conceal even from Val, who is watching her closely, that she is not the same as usual. Mr. Travers is carried away with her wit and gayety, and tells a few choice spirits at the club later that he envies but one man—Underwood.

For the next few days Viva's admirers give her the reputation of being capricious—"The airs of a professional beauty and a young woman who has captured the prize of the season," says an old clubman.

"Erratic! And if she were not a Carrol, I would think she is really in love," thinks Valentine.

"Losing her head and playing with edged tools—Chester Underwood is not the man to stand that sort of thing long. If she goes *too* far, I will have a settlement with her which she will not forget, I think," says Mrs. Livingston.

Viva—oh, who knows but herself the suffering of those days: the wild, tempestuous thoughts that run through her brain? She seizes upon a hundred mad schemes, each to be thrown aside as more impracticable than the last. She thinks once of persuading him to marry her

at once and of telling him afterward, but she dare not; she knows he would never forgive her in the world. It would be like going to the altar with a lie on her lips. She has taken so much chloral that her brain is dulled and she cannot think clearly; her judgment and usual diplomacy have left her. She curses herself that she did not deal differently with Lucy Cockerill; perhaps if she had humbled that wretched pride a little, or offered to buy her silence, it would have been all right; but she knows such peace would only be a mockery, and even as his wife she would never know a moment free from the haunting dread of discovery; and she could not look into his true eyes, knowing she had deceived him. The hours slip by and bring her doom nearer. There is only one more day now before the *dénouement*.

She has been driving, alone—she prefers to be alone. The strain of keeping up the chit-chat of society is telling upon her. She flings the reins to a groom, gets out of the high cart, and goes up the steps.

“Mr. Carrol is in the octagon room,” says Sims, the English hallman, the envy of all of Mrs. Livingston’s swell acquaintances, as he opens the front door for her.

She goes straight to her den and finds Val teaching her tiny French poodle to keep time to “Dixie.”

“How art thou, oh, light of my soul?” says Val as she enters, releasing the poodle, who takes advantage of his tormentor’s inattention to seek a safe retreat under the divan.

“I had an idea I would find you here,” she says, going to the mantel and leaning her elbow on it.

“Clear illustration of the communication of twin souls, my own,” diving after the poodle. “Yes, it took

an extra tip to Sims to have this pleasure, which I hope you appreciate, knowing my financial condition. I fancy my lady has given orders not to admit me when she is out," with a delighted chuckle.

She laughs too. It is so absurd, this notion of her aunt, as if she could care for any but the man she has promised to marry and whom she loves with all the passionate strength of her Southern nature.

"What are you doing to Jeff? Here, Jeff," she calls to the poodle, which was a Christmas gift from Jeff Guthrie.

The dog comes out, looking suspiciously at Val, and seats himself on the white cashmere goatskin at her feet, his white, curly coat mingling with and becoming indistinguishable from the rug. Viva stands silently and looks into the fire. Perhaps she had better tell Val; he is a man of the world, and can deal with that treacherous woman better than she; he is her kinsman, and surely is interested in her welfare. Yes, as much as she hates to make any one a confidant in her affairs, she is so sorely in need of counsel that she thinks—

"From the way he looks at you, one would think he reads your very thoughts; and perhaps he does," says Valentine.

She turns with a startled cry. What can he mean? "Confound you, Viva, you have scared him into swallowing my ancient Egyptian coin." He had been teaching Jeff to stand on his hind legs and balance the coin on his nose, and the poor little dog had looked at Viva pleadingly to rescue him.

She gives a hysterical laugh and falls from the tragic to the supremely comic; and so, perhaps the one thing

that could have saved her is neglected—the opportunity is lost. Mrs. Livingston enters and sends her to dress for an informal dinner at Tottie Gillette's.

“You will be late now; hurry,” she says.

It is her last afternoon—to-morrow the crash will come. Viva lies on the divan in her boudoir robed in a white silk tea-gown trimmed with swan's-down. The twilight shadows mingle with those the red fire-light throws about the dainty apartment. It is impossible to read—her book was thrown down long before it grew too dark to see. Her hands are pressed over her hot eyelids. How her temples throb!

“Mr. Hunderwood,” says that treasure of an English servant, throwing open the door.

She rises and goes forward with outheld hands.

“Do not think I have a total disregard for the fitness of things to appear at this time of day,” he says with a laugh. “But the truth is, when I got through with that tiresome afternoon banquet at the Reform Club I felt that nothing but the sight of you would refresh me; so, as I am to dine with you to-night, I dressed and came at once.”

“As if you need apologize about what time you come—as if you could come too soon,” she says, looking up into his strong, handsome face admiringly.

He laughs contentedly. His heart tells him how true she is. Then the smile fades from his face and a little spasm of pain contracts it.

“You will find me very dull company, indeed, I fear. I have an insufferable headache, and must put up with it since my physician promised to cure me of these chronic headaches of mine provided I take his doses

long enough and leave my pet remedy, antipyrin, alone."

"I am so sorry," she says. "Sit here and let me see if I can cure it," drawing a big chair up to the fire. "Now let me put this back of your head," placing a down pillow. "One more; there, that is comfortable, I think." She goes to a little cabinet and gets a bottle of *eau de cologne*, which she pours on her handkerchief. Then standing at the back of his chair, she smooths his forehead. How handsome he is, she thinks, as she looks down upon him, with his dark head resting against the white cushion, and his great eyes staring dreamily into the fire.

A mouth for mastery and manful work,
A certain brooding sweetness in the eye,
A brow, the harbor of fair thoughts.

"What strong, cool hands you have, Viva. I never believed that theory of rubbing headaches away before. I'll tell Dr. Belton to-morrow that I have 'thrown his physics to the dogs,' and that I have found a cure for headache at last."

"Is it better? I am so glad," coming around and sitting on the arm of his chair. He leans his head against her arm, the swan's-down on her sleeve making a soft resting-place.

"I will have to leave you now and dress for dinner. I do not know whom auntie has asked; only a few, though, I think. Then we go to the Burton-Evans ball—oh, let us give that up, I do not want to go. Please say you do not care to go, but will spend the evening here with me alone. It is a fancy of mine,

but I want you to humor it," putting her arms about his throat.

"Nonsense, child; the ball of the senior Senator from New York to me, just after my election, is almost official; and of course, I—and, in fact, *we*—must go."

"But I do not want to. Say you will stay, sweetheart?" tightening her arms.

"Of course, if you are not feeling well or do not want to go, I will excuse you; but it is impossible for me to decline the invitation this late in the day without some excellent reason."

She shudders. How firm, how determined he is! If he will not yield a small point like this, what will he say when he knows all that Miss Cockerill can tell him? She feels how awful it would be to lose his kindly sympathy now; to look into his dear eyes and see the love light die out. She knows that she would rather die—yes, that would be such an easy way out of it all, if she could only die! But to give up a moment of his society on this last night, when he still worships her, that would be impossible!

"Oh, no, no, I am perfectly well; I was just selfish and wanted you all to myself," she says. He smiles and kisses the bowed head.

At the Burton-Evans ball Viva is, as usual, one of the belles. Mrs. Livingston is suffering with a cold, and Claire, who was her guest at dinner, is chaperoning Viva. Jack Montague sees her as Underwood leaves her at the cloakroom; sees the way she lingeringly takes her hand out of his arm, knowing that as he does not dance it will be some time perhaps before she can have an opportunity of speaking to him again: sees her

put up her fan and whisper something, and watch him with admiration in her eyes as he turns away.

"By Jove, they'd puzzle the sphinx on her own riddles!" says Jack. "Just as you think you have got 'em down to a fine point, they are clear off the track. I, for one, am going to foreswear the whole lot of 'em. Oh, Mrs. Thornton, charmed to see you! May I hope for a dance, or are you engaged, as usual, for a dozen extras?"

"I saved you one," says Claire prettily, and the would-be cynic forgets he has just sworn to rail at the fair sex forever.

"Val, I want to see you. I drove to your quarters this morning, but for once you were the pattern of industry and were out with the early worm," says Viva, as she comes out of the cloakroom.

"Yes, my man told me," offering her his arm and taking her to speak to her hostess, while Claire follows with Jack. "And, my dear, don't you think it a little *risqué* to sit in your cart in front of the bachelor apartment-house of some of the gayest men in town, even if one is a kinsman?"

"Not at all. I am the fashion; I can do as I please. Besides, I am Mrs. Livingston's niece and Senator-elect Underwood's *fiancée*, pray do not lose sight of those two important items," saucily. "I want you to come to me as early as possible to-morrow. I have something interesting to show you."

"You excite my curiosity," he says courteously, as she goes forward with Claire to speak to the hostess.

"It will be best to have him there for auntie's sake," she thinks. Yes, her mind is made up now—there is

but one way out of the difficulty. She laughs, chats, and flirts the evening through, and they will tell each other with blanched faces to-morrow that they never saw her look more beautiful or in a more brilliant humor.

She is wearing her favorite costume—white silk—and has hyacinths in her hair. Between the dances, once near midnight, Chester Underwood comes to her and draws her hand through his arm.

“Let me get you a glass of punch, my darling; you have been dancing so much you must be tired.”

Oh, if he only knew how very, very tired she is! But she must conceal it; it is for the last time—in a few hours it will all be over. She smiles into his eyes and he leads her to a little alcove where the punchbowl is. As he hands her the glass, some one knocks his arm and the crimson liquid spills over the trail of her gown.

“How stupid of me! Can you forgive me? I heard Mrs. Livingston say it is a new gown, and it is certainly the most becoming one I ever saw you wear. I am so sorry.”

“It does not matter—it can all be taken out very easily with chloroform. I have a treasure of a maid who taught me that trick last week.”

“Are you sure?”

“Perfectly,” as she tucks the trail up to conceal the stain and goes off with her partner, who claims her for the next dance.

At last the ball is over. She looks curiously at the people who tell her good-night and murmur that they will see her at such a tea or reception to-morrow. How strange it is, she thinks, as she stands on the steps with a gay party waiting for the carriage, that this is the

last time she will ever drive over these brilliantly lighted streets. They find as they enter the hall at home a dim light from a jewelled rose lamp. The house is as silent as the grave. Mrs. Livingston has long since retired, and Viva never keeps her maid up when she goes to a ball.

CHAPTER XXV.

HE unfastens her ball cloak of ermine; it is not whiter than the satiny shoulders and throat it reveals. She clings to him—it is for the last time, though he does not know it. What would he say, she wonders, if he did? He is surprised and pleased at her unwonted show of affection.

“You had an enjoyable evening, my queen, even though you did not want to go,” holding her in his arms and brushing back the hair from her forehead.

“Yes, I am glad I went,” she says looking at him, oh! so closely; she wants to remember every line of that dear face at the last. Perhaps some part of the thought is transmitted to him: he seems loath to let her go; he loosens his arms from about her once, but quickly draws her to him more closely. At last he releases her. She lets her arms fall from about his throat; she goes to the banister, lays her hand heavily upon the post and goes slowly up to the first landing. The jewelled lamp shines directly down upon her. He stands and watches her. She turns, and in the dim light he sees plainly the crimson stain the wine he spilled has left on her gown.

Over the banister bends a face,
Daringly sweet and beguiling;
Somebody stands, in careless grace,
And watches the picture smiling,

The lights burn dim in the hall below;
Nobody sees her standing.
Saying good-night again, soft and slow,
Half-way up to the landing.

Nobody only those eyes of brown,
Tender and full of meaning,
That smile on the fairest face in town,
Over the banister leaning.

Tired and sleepy, with drooping head,
I wonder why she lingers—
Now, when all the good-nights are said,
Why somebody holds her fingers.

He holds her fingers and draws her down,
Suddenly growing bolder,
Till the loose hair droops its masses brown,
Like a mantle, over his shoulder.

Over the banister, soft hands fair
Brush his cheeks like a feather,
And bright-brown tresses and dusky hair
Meet and mingle together.

There is a question asked; there's a swift caress—
She has flown like a bird up the hallway;
But over the banister drops a "Yes,"
That brightens the world for him alway.

She turns, and her cloak slips off her shoulders and falls in a heap at her feet. She holds out her bare arms.

"Chester," she calls. He goes up the stairway and catches her as she falls, with a little gasp, on his breast.

"What is it, my darling? You are tired, after all, I fear," as he puts her hand on his shoulder and pushes in place a bracelet on her shapely arm.

The diamond star on her breast rises and falls with each pulsation of her heart. The white hyacinths in her hair touch his lips. He never smells hyacinths afterward without a shudder, for their delicate odor makes him faint. She raises herself in his arms. One last look, in which she seems to send her very soul out into space to meet his, and she draws herself from his clasp, and, leaving him on the landing with the ermine ball-cloak at his feet, she goes up the stairway and is lost in the gloom of the upper corridor. Upstairs, she rushes to her room and flings open the blinds; she sees him go down the stone steps, stop under the lamp-post to light a cigar (how eagerly, hungrily she watches every movement), and get into his *coupé*. One hand rests on the sill of the door of the *coupé*, which he has just closed; it is all she can see of him as they turn the corner. What would she not give to kiss that hand just once more? When he is lost to view, she throws herself in a chair and covers her eyes with her bare arms, resting a hand on either elbow. It is over, she thinks; she has already taken leave of life—this other is a secondary matter. She sits for hours, going over again and again every word he has spoken to her, like a miser gloating over his gold. She could not live without him—it is not the dread of going back to the poverty into which Mrs. Livingston has threatened to thrust her if, through her, the engagement is broken. She would not mind the old life of drudgery if she had his love to brighten it. She fears to put him to the test. She would rather die with the memory of his kiss on her lips. No death could be as bitter as looking at him and finding his eyes bent coldly, disapprovingly upon her. She gets

up and goes to the window. A carriage is passing; under the gas light, she sees the man lean forward and fasten the cloak of the woman beside him. How it hurts her—just so he has fastened *her* cloak so often, and always with some whispered caress. The starlight filters through the upper blinds and falls upon her white face. She sees a man in evening dress opposite fling a beggar child roughly out of his path. The child sits on the curbstone and cries. She raises the window, calls the child to her, and flings it a bracelet—no, not that one—*he* touched it—the other one. Then she lowers the shades and turns on the lights. It is nearly day—no time to be lost. Think what the morrow brings! She takes off her ball-gown and puts on a dressing-robe, and lays the chloroform bottle out. She goes up to the bureau; here is the plan of improvements for her old home, Glenwood, which he was to give her for a wedding present. Poor old Aunt Pinky and Uncle Josh are preparing for and looking forward to her coming. It was her wish to spend the first few weeks of their married life there. Oh, it is awful! She picks up a photograph of Valentine, which he sent this afternoon with some flowers.

“The Carrols are a doomed lot. So many of us die by our own hand, but we die game and scientifically; there is no shrinking, and no newspaper scandal—and no one knows positively. Oh, my cousin Val, when the final annals of the Carrols are written, what picturesque doom or mysterious death will be recorded of you!”

The pictured face seems to look mockingly at her. “You are afraid,” it says. She drops it with a shudder.

“I am glad *he* spilled the wine; it might make him

sorrier if he should find out—but he won't. They will send for him the first thing in the morning; and she cannot see him till she knows what has happened, and then she will be afraid. She will have the superstition of the narrow-minded of death, and she will fear me and cower before me dead as she did living. What a paradox of fate it all is! At three-and-twenty, with youth, beauty, wealth and position, and *love* I must give up life. With as fair prospects as are usually allotted to mortals, I must confess myself a failure, and with only myself to blame. Time, of all things, is the most cruel. Why could it not stay to-night forever? After all this waiting for such happiness, when it comes I am not ready and must let it go by. Is it not horrible? I seem weighted down by my own helplessness."

She takes a little sponge and dips it in the chloroform and begins cleaning the gown.

"I will be supposed to have been overcome by the fumes and to have fallen face downward on the wet place," she thinks.

When she has removed a little of the stain, she holds the sponge to her face. She struggles and gasps, and remembers a dentist once told her it would be difficult for her to be put under the influence of chloroform, that she would fight against it. It shoots through her nostrils like hartshorn. It is awful! She fears she will have to give it up. She has put the dress down and is lying on the sofa, with the sponge held to her face. She reaches for the bracelet he has touched; she feels herself yielding to the drug; she gets up from the sofa; she must be found on the floor beside the dress. The lights expand and grow smaller, and seem to be coming

toward her; everything has a gray veil over it. Val's face looks approvingly at her from out the mist—"Like a Carrol," he says. On the mantel is Charlie's picture; she is glad his eyes are turned away. He is in the canvas uniform, a suit the cadets wear for work and drills upon the water, and with his name written across his chest. She hopes he will never know. Any way, he must remember she did not promise not to want the marriage undone. She cannot see any more. The dressing-gown is open at the throat, and the diamond star upon the white chest rises and falls with the labored and deep breaths. The white hyacinths in her hair are withered. Her hand loosens its hold upon the bracelet. The little game she has played with Destiny is over, and she has lost! She is at rest, beyond the reach of Lucy Cockerill or mortal woman. The stars go out, and the morning sun pours into the room, putting to shame the flickering gas-jets. The soiled, crumpled white glove has fallen from a table and lies beside her on the floor.

THE END.

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